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THE JUDGMENT OF CONSCIENCE &C.

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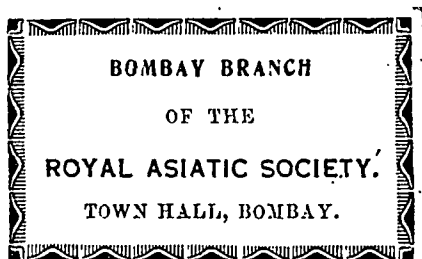
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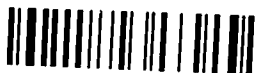
THE
JUDGMENT OF CONSCIENCE
AND OTHER SERMONS.

BY THE LATE
RICHARD WHATELY, D.D.
ARCHBISHOP OF DUBLIN.

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P R E F A C E.

THE PRESENT VOLUME contains the chief part of the unpublished Sermons of the late Archbishop of Dublin. The selection is a small one; but among those he left in manuscript, the greater number had already been incorporated in the various works published during his lifetime, and may be found, in substance, in his Lectures on the Parables, on Prayer, on Good and Evil Angels, and on the Apostles, as also in a volume of "Sermons delivered in Dublin," published several years ago. The remainder are now collected into this volume, only omitting one or two written for special occasions, and of merely local interest.

E. J. W.

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THE JUDGMENT OF CONSCIENCE.

1 Cor. iv. 1.

*Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ,
and stewards of the mysteries of God.*

THE apostle is speaking, in this place, of the judgment which men are likely to form, and ought, or ought not to form, of themselves, and of the ministers appointed to instruct them. The subject is a very important one; and the consideration of it seems to me suitable for such an occasion as the present.

The apostle declares that he is not conscious of being other than faithful in his ministry; but he adds that neither the Corinthians nor he himself, nor any man, is authorised to pronounce a decisive, infallible judgment on human conduct. And he thence says, in conclusion, "Judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come." (1 Cor. iv. 2—5.) "Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful. But with me it is a very small thing to be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I judge

not mine own self. For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord. Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God."

I have made choice of this passage in preference to several others which might serve equally well to inculcate the same doctrine, chiefly on account of the obscurity (to English ears at least) with which it is expressed; the consequence of which is, that the useful lesson which these words convey, is often lost on the unlearned reader, from his not understanding or misconceiving their meaning.

I will endeavour, therefore, first to set before you the signification of the passages, and, afterwards, offer some remarks on the truth implied in it, which will be perhaps the more impressed on your memory, on account of the very difficulty of the passage which teaches it, when once that difficulty shall have been done away.

St. Paul, in the chapter in which it occurs, as well as in several other parts of both his epistles to the Corinthians, is occupied in pressing upon their attention the authority he possessed as a minister of the Gospel, appointed by Christ himself, and the attention, and deference, and submission with which they were bound to receive his doctrines and his

directions (confirmed as they had been by signs from heaven), as well as the gratitude and regard due to him who had laboured so zealously and so faithfully and effectually for their good. But he is careful to warn them, from time to time, that it is for their sakes, not for his own, that he desires their good opinion,—that he does not covet their applause, nor submit himself to their judgment, being responsible to his own Master, who had sent him to them; but that he wishes them, on account of their own eternal interests, not to disregard, or abuse, or undervalue so great advantages as had been bestowed on them. [It was as common, seemingly, in those days as in these, for men to pass judgment on others rather than on themselves, and especially to criticise and decide on the abilities and worth of their teachers, more than to inquire how far they themselves had profited by what was taught.] For his own part, the apostle remarks, that so far from committing to them the decision concerning his merit and fidelity, he does not even regard his own conscience as a sufficient and competent judge on that question. “With me,” says he, “it is a very small matter to be judged of you or of man’s judgment; yea, I judge not mine own self. For I know nothing by myself, yet am I not hereby justified; but He that judgeth me is the Lord.”

The meaning of the expression which is translated, “I know nothing by myself,” is, “I know nothing *against* myself”—*i.e.* “I am not conscious of any fault.” And yet, says he, this clearness of

my own conscience does not justify me, does not prove me freer from fault, any more than your acquittal and approbation would have done, since "He that judgeth me is the Lord;"—it is "for *Him*," he says, "not for you or myself, to pronounce a righteous sentence on the life of every man, when He shall come, and 'bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the hearts'—*i.e.* He being alone the All-seeing and All-wise, is alone fit to be the infallible Judge of mankind—'and then shall every man have [*his*] praise of God'—*i.e.* such praise as his character warrants, and as is suitable to him."

That the sense of the passage is what I have just given is so plain to any one who consults the original, that I cannot doubt our translators must have so understood it, and must have intended to convey that meaning in the words of their interpretation, "I know nothing by myself" (1 Cor. iv. 4); though certainly such a phrase would not in the present day be employed or understood to signify, "I am not conscious of any fault;" but in the course of two centuries, which have elapsed since our translators wrote, the English language has, of course, undergone some changes, and there are accordingly, as many of you must have observed who are in the habit of studying the Bible, several words and phrases which are at present nearly out of use, and some of which (though not many) are difficult to be understood by the generality of readers; and there is no

doubt that the passage before us is one of these obsolete phrases, it being still in use in some parts of England in the same sense as here used.

St. Paul teaches, then, that he does not think himself (nor, of course, any one else) authorised to conclude that he is right because his conscience acquits him, no man being himself a competent judge of his own conduct. Experience and reason, indeed, seem to show, as well as St. Paul's words, that it is possible for a man to be deceived in his own judgment of himself, and to act unjustifiably, even while he is acting conscientiously; and the apostle himself affords a remarkable instance of this self-delusion. He was, as he frequently reminds us, himself a blasphemer and persecutor of Christ and his Church previous to his miraculous conversion; and in this he tells us he had the approbation of his conscience—"For I verily thought," says he, "that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth." (Acts xxvi. 9.) And our Lord himself had foretold that this very thing was to be looked for—"It shall come to pass that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service." (John xvi. 2.) He does not say, you observe, whosoever killeth you will *pretend* that he doeth God service, but *will think* so—will be sincerely persuaded in his own conscience that he is not only justified, but is meritorious, in persecuting the Christians.

Since, then, such gross self-deceit took place, as we thus learn from Divine authority, in these in-

stances, and since the like takes place, as there is every reason to believe, in numberless other instances every day, it must be perfectly evident that a man's acting conscientiously is no proof that he is acting rightly; nor his being acquitted in his own judgment any assurance that he will be acquitted before Christ's judgment-seat at the last day. "Judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts; and then shall every man have [his] praise of God." (1 Cor. iv. 5.) The only matter of wonder and of difficulty is how, since this is so obvious a truth, so many should be found who appear to disbelieve it, and to regard their own conscience as an infallible judge—I say "appear," because there are perhaps few who would distinctly avow such sentiments, who would say in so many words, "I am certain my conduct is always right, as long as I myself approve it:" and yet, nothing is more common than to find men expressing and seeming to feel the most perfect satisfaction, the fullest security, the most undoubting confidence in the testimony of their own conscience; they are fully assured that they have nothing to fear, since their own heart acquits them, and they have acted according to the dictates of their own judgment: they reverse, in short, St. Paul's maxim, and say, "I am not conscious of having done wrong, and I *am* therefore justified."

Now it is plain, from what has been just said, that

it is very possible for a man to think or to act amiss, and yet to obtain the sanction and approbation of his own conscience, since he may conscientiously either preach or persecute the Gospel; and of two opposite opinions or modes of conduct it is impossible that both should be right.

But many persons, I believe, are disposed to think that, though what our conscience approves is not necessarily right in itself, it is at least justified as far as regards ourselves—that he who does what he thinks right is by that circumstance acquitted in the sight of God, even though he may have been mistaken in his judgment. According to this view conscientiousness would be (supposing such a person to have any belief at all in *any* religion) everything, and absolute right and wrong nothing—what a man's belief or practice may be is of no consequence provided he himself approves of it. The persecutors of the Gospel and its martyrs would be precisely on a level in the sight of God, as long as they are both sincere, and the acceptance or rejection of the truth, which Jesus Christ came into the world to bear witness of, would become a matter of utter indifference so long as a man really believes what he professes. Indeed I have myself known a person so decidedly and consistently act upon this principle as to have his son (from motives of convenience) educated in a different religious persuasion from his own. The absurdity of such conduct as this is a thing which needs no proof; but it serves to prove

the absurdity of the principle itself, which, when fairly and fully followed up, leads to such consequences.

It is sufficiently plain that Jesus Christ himself taught a widely different doctrine. The same who warned his apostles that "whosoever killed them would think that he did God a service," denounced also the heaviest judgments against those who should so reject them, saying, "Into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you not, go your ways out into the streets of the same, and say, Even the very dust of your city, which cleaveth on us, we do wipe off against you." And St. Paul, in like manner, never fails to condemn and bewail his own former conduct in conscientiously opposing the Gospel, and to return thanks for God's extraordinary mercy in pardoning and recalling him, reckoning himself "the chief of sinners," and the "least of all the apostles," who am not meet to be called an apostle, "because I persecuted the church of God." (1 Cor. xv. 9.)

Why, indeed, should the Gospel have even been proclaimed, if it were a matter of indifference, as far as each individual is concerned, whether he received or rejected the truth? Why should the Scriptures be given us as our rule of life, according to which we are to be judged at the last day, if every man's own conscience is an infallible judge, or at least one whose decisions will justify him? "The fool," says the Psalmist, "hath said in his heart, There is no God" (Ps. xiv. 1); but he would not be a fool, nor incur

the fearful judgment immediately after denounced against him, if his own heart were the judge from whose decisions there is no appeal.

But it may be said, if this be the case, what is the use of conscience? Why are we exhorted to judge ourselves, if our judgment is unavailing? and why are we told that "if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God," if the approval of our own heart afford no ground for such confidence?

The right statement of the case is this:—Conscience is a judge, but not an infallible law. We have, indeed, a certain moral faculty implanted in us which is intended to help us to the distinguishing of right and wrong: this, like all our other faculties, is capable of improvement, and liable to corruption. In order to aid its cultivation, to guard against its degeneracy, and to extend its jurisdiction, God has revealed in many cases his will to us, that we may believe and obey his will; and the conscience which he has implanted in us serves to decide, if we are diligent to make the proper use of it, whether we are conformed or not to his will. But he has warned us, in his Holy Word, that "the heart of man is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." (Jer. xvii. 9.) Our conscience, as it is capable of improvement and cultivation, is also, like the rest of our nature, liable to errors and perversions, which we are bound watchfully to guard against, knowing that the final and unerring judgment is reserved for God himself, in which those errors and perversions

will be rectified, and the veil of self-deceit, which conceals our faults from ourselves, will be removed, as well as that hypocrisy which conceals faults from men. And knowing, too, that we are answerable not only for every offence against our conscience, but also for every offence of our conscience, it is our part watchfully to regulate our conscience as well as our conduct. For if you regulate your life by a false standard, your conformity to that standard will not justify you. If you weigh your conduct ever so accurately with false weights or an uneven balance, you have no ground for hoping that it will be approved by your All-seeing Judge. If, indeed, any one's conscience condemns him, he may be sure that he is guilty of sin in the sight of God, whether his conduct be right or wrong in itself, because his intention is sinful; but, on the other hand, the approval of his conscience does not at once acquit him, unless his conscience also has been duly cultivated and conformed to God's Word. You should keep in mind, therefore, that any one who has taken up some wrong *principle* cannot possibly act rightly till he is cured of that error. For he is wrong if he acts *on* that false principle, and he is wrong if he acts *against* it. Paul, *e.g.*, laments his own sinfulness in opposing the Gospel, though he "did it ignorantly in unbelief." But he would have sinned if, while he had this unbelief, he had found the Gospel, because he would have been favouring what, though in reality true, was believed by him to be false. He could not

possibly therefore avoid sin till he was convinced of the truth.

Doubtless we may hope that if any one does his very utmost to regulate not only his conduct by the dictates of his conscience, but his conscience by the standard of God's will, an allowance will be made for the errors of judgment he may fall into—this weakness of understanding, or this unavoidable ignorance. But there is a great difference between want of knowledge and want of candour, though both may alike lead to error. The allowances which may be made for dulness of intellect will not be extended to perversity and prejudice. There is a wide distinction between the blindness of those who obstinately shut their eyes, or who turn them away from the truth—of those, in short, who do not choose to see—and the blindness which arises from unavoidable disease or accident; and if men are in blindness as to what is right and wrong, not because the light has not shone, but because they have “loved darkness better than light,” they cannot hope to be reckoned among the children of light. Their wrong judgment is not the *cause* of their wrong conduct, but the effect of it. For the truth is, that corruption and perversity of will gradually deprave the conscience; so that there is nothing a man is disposed to do which he may not in time bring himself to think he may do, and ought to do. That same Tempter who leads him into sin is ready to teach him numberless excuses by which to palliate and justify his sin; and the sinner then

shelters himself under the approval of his conscience, which he has himself been labouring to pervert; but this, so far from being a vindication, is an aggravation of his offence; for he is not acting as he does because his conscience approves it, but, on the contrary, his conscience is taught to approve it because he does it. He who is only anxious at any rate to quiet and satisfy his own conscience will generally succeed; for the very punishment which God inflicts on those who do not study earnestly to conform to his will, is to give them up to the dictates of their own corrupt will. He forsakes those who have forsaken him, and suffers to be deluded those who are anxious to be deluded. Accordingly St. Paul (in Romans) says that the absurd and abominable superstitions and corruptions of the idolatrous Gentiles were a consequence of God's judgment upon them for wilfully blinding themselves against such truth as lay within their reach. It was, he says, "because when they knew God they glorified him not as God, that they became fools; and that God also gave *them* up to uncleanness; who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped the creature more than the Creator. For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections; . . . and even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind" (an undiscerning or misjudging mind). For there are two things, either of which few will ever seek in vain who seek earnestly: the one is, the knowledge of

what we ought to do ; the other, a plausible excuse for doing what we are inclined to. Since it appears, then, that conscience is no infallible judge—since it may not only be sometimes silenced, but may also be perverted, by judging according to a false standard, what is required of the Christian that he may have a reasonable confidence of abiding the infallible judgment of God ? Evidently he is to take pains in regulating not only his actions, but his conscience ; to examine himself daily, not only whether his life be such as his own heart approves, but also whether his heart itself be right with God ; not only to walk according to the light of his own judgment, but to take heed that the light which is in him be not darkness ; to distrust himself even while he is examining himself, and be carefully on his guard against the deceitfulness and self-partiality of the human heart—humbly seeking for a corrective of those errors, and an unerring guide from Him from whose Spirit proceedeth every good and every perfect gift. He who proceeds with due care and circumspection need not be in continual terror of making a false step or missing his way. It is those who walk boldly, because blindly—whose conscience is at ease, because hardened—that are in the most danger of going astray or of falling ; it is those who are satisfied so long as their conscience does but approve, and confidently trust that they are right because they are free from misgivings and self-reproach—those are the persons who have most need of alarm, because

they are insensible to their danger. But the humble and self-distrusting Christian has in that very self-distrust one of the surest safeguards; and by his habits of perpetual caution is likely to become more and more safe every day. By studying attentively the Word of God, not as a meritorious act, but as a means of learning his duty, by employing the best means within his reach for obtaining a right understanding of it, and by labouring to apply what he learns to his own practice; by listening to the ministers of God's Word; by consulting in sincerity every candid and right-judging friend; and, above all, by praying and striving with all importunity for the aid and guidance of God's enlightening Spirit—these are the means by which the Christian should strive to regulate and rectify the judgment of his own conscience, if he would hope to abide the judgment of Christ at the last day. It is to those whose minds are thus disciplined that St. John is addressing himself when he says, "Beloved, if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things." (1 John iii. 20.) For such Christians, thus diligent in purifying their hearts, if they do not avoid altogether every fault (for there is no man that sinneth not), will, at least, not fail to detect it, and to condemn it in their own hearts. Weeds *will* spring up even in the best cultivated land, but they will not there be left standing to spread their roots and scatter their seeds around. But to have a perfectly quiet *conscience*, which never

gives molestation, is far from being a mark of Christian perfection. To have a tender conscience, which takes alarm at the smallest transgression, and is ever humbly vigilant—this is the real ground of Christian confidence.

I will observe, in conclusion, that the utility, and even necessity, of conscience, and of the moral judgments of our own reason, so far from being done away, appear even the more evidently from the view which has been taken; for conscience and reason, if we were left with no other guide, would often lead us astray, as we see by experience in the case of those who are thus led into different and even opposite modes of faith and practice, all of which cannot be right, though it is possible for all to be wrong; whereas, if we prove, and regulate, and rectify our moral judgment by the revealed will of God, which was designed for that very purpose, conscience and reason will then guide us aright. And, indeed, the written laws of God would be of no use if we had not the faculty of conscience, which enables us to sit in judgment on our conduct, and compare it with the standard of the Divine will.

The compass would be of no use, if the helm did not enable us to steer by it. Moreover, the Divine laws being expressed *generally*, many cases, of course, will occur to which they will not *immediately* and *expressly* apply; for if every case were to be distinctly stated that can possibly occur, and a command or a prohibition annexed, “the whole world would

not contain the books that should be written." (John xxi. 25.)

It is in such instances that reason, or the moral faculty or moral sense, as some call it, comes into play; being designed, not to be substituted for God's laws, but to be a help to us in conforming to those laws, and to aid us in the application of Christian principles to every action and every thought of our lives. To use a familiar illustration, our reason may be compared to a clock, which has the advantage of being always at hand, and may be consulted at any hour of the day or night; whereas the sun-dial can be consulted only occasionally, when it is supplied with the light from heaven. But then it is this last that is the unerring guide, with which the other is to be compared from time to time, and by which it is to be regulated; since else it may vary from the true time to any extent, and, instead of rectifying its own errors, will become more and more in fault, and will serve only to mislead those who trust in it. Even so it is with natural reason, as compared with the Scriptures, which direct us according to the wisdom that is from above; in each particular instance that may occur, our own hearts will furnish a decision as to what is right and wrong, and that in many cases which are not particularly specified in the written Word of God, though they fall under the general principles of the Gospel. But then our own hearts are liable to deceive us, even to the greatest extent, and to give wrong judgments, if they are

not from time to time corrected and regulated by a reference to the Word of God, which alone affords an infallible and unerring oracle.

Watch and pray therefore, not only against the violence of such temptations as may overpower your conscience, but also against the delusions of self-deceit which may corrupt and blind it.

I will conclude by reminding you that one of the commonest of those crafts is that of which the apostle warns the Corinthians when he tells them to "judge nothing before the time," and, again, that it is "a very small thing for him to be judged of you or of man's judgment." (1 Cor. iv. 3.) It is so much easier, and, to man's nature, so much a pleasanter employment, than examining and watching our own conduct and conscience—it is so much easier, I say, to scrutinise our neighbours' conduct, and pass judgment on the preacher, while at the same time it flatters our heart with the appearance of earnestness in religion, that it is no wonder men are so often thus self-deceived. But the smallest fault in yourself is more worthy of your attention than much greater ones in your neighbours, both because it is you that will be accountable for it, and because it rests with you to amend it.

In respect of others, therefore, remember the apostle's precept not to "judge hastily, before the time;" and with respect to your own conduct, judge yourselves, brethren, that ye be not judged of the Lord to condemnation; and pray, as our Church

directs us, for the enlightening grace of God's Holy Spirit, that we may "know those things that be right," as well as for his supporting grace, "that we may have strength and power faithfully to perform the same;" and he will then enable us, not only to do always what our judgment approves, but also "to have a right judgment in all things."

THE RIGHTS OF CONSCIENCE.*

HEBREWS vi. 10.

God is not unrighteous, to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have showed towards his name, in that ye have ministered to his saints, and do minister.

TO most of you it is probably unnecessary to remark that by saints the apostle means what we mean by the word Christians, and that he is here speaking of the good offices of Christians towards each other.

Most people of the present day are accustomed to confine the term saint to the inspired evangelists and apostles, and to other eminent Christians who possessed miraculous gifts; or, at least, to persons of a supposed extraordinary degree of holiness, beyond what is expected of Christians in general. But this is quite at variance with the Scriptural use of the word. "Saints" (or holy, for both are the same word in the original) is always used by the apostles to denote any person who had professed the Christian faith, and had been dedicated to Christ in baptism. It was not even confined to those who were leading such a holy life as is required of all who can hope for acceptance with God, but is applied to good and bad

* Preached on behalf of the Society for Protecting the Rights of Conscience:

alike, to the subjects, whether dutiful or rebellious, of the kingdom of heaven; in short, to all to whom the term Christian would be applied now. And the same, it is worth remarking, may be said of the terms "elect" (*i.e.* chosen), "called," and "brethren," all of which are used to denote just what *we* mean by "Christian." It seems that the sacred writers chose to avoid using a *new* term, such as Christian (which they never applied to each other), and to confine themselves to those appellations which had belonged to God's people of old under the Mosaic dispensation. The Israelites of old were all "brethren" after the flesh, were all "called"—all, whether obedient or undutiful, a "holy" people (*i.e.* dedicated and set apart for God's service), and all the Lord's "chosen," or "elect," even when by their disobedience they converted the intended blessing into a curse.

These titles accordingly, and these exclusively, the sacred writers chose to apply to Christians, in order, I conceive, to show that the Gospel dispensation was a completion and extension of the Mosaic, and that *all*, Jew and Gentile alike, as many as would receive the Gospel, were henceforth to be accounted "the Israel of God," his "called" and "chosen" (or elect) people, and enrolled in the number of his "saints."

The apostle then is, as I have said, speaking in the passage now before us (as well as in a great number of others) of the good offices of Christians to

each other. And it is remarkable that his language plainly implies that to suppose God could forget and take no account of our benevolent exertions in behalf of our fellow-Christians, would be to reckon him "unrighteous"—*i.e.* unjust.

The same is taught in various parts of Scripture, as *e.g.* when our Lord represents himself as saying, at the day of judgment, to those who had relieved the distressed, "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me;" and He declares also, in the same description, that those likewise will not be forgotten who shall have *neglected* these labours of love on them. He pronounces an awful sentence of rejection, adding, "Forasmuch as ye did it *not* unto one of the least of these, ye did it not to me." (Matt. xxv. 45.)

The apostles, moreover, take occasion to warn their hearers from time to time against the danger of being *deceived* by any such representations of the Christian faith as might lead them to think they could be acceptable to God independently of practical obedience to his will. "Little children," says Apostle John, "let no man *deceive* you: he that *doeth* righteousness is righteous, even as He (God) is righteous." And so also Apostle Paul: "Be not *deceived*; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. He that soweth unto his flesh shall of the flesh reap destruction" ("corruption," which is the word used in our version, signified in old English what we now call destruction); "but he that soweth

to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." . . . "As we have, therefore, opportunity, let us do good unto all men." All which is in accordance with our Lord's warning, both in the passage just cited and when He says, "Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" and again, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman: every branch in me that beareth not fruit, He taketh away. . . . Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit: so shall ye be my disciples."

Now it may, perhaps, be thought superfluous to dwell on, or even to mention, a truth so very obvious and so fully admitted, in words at least, by all who bear the name of Christians; as that Christian life is the necessary fruit of a real Christian faith—that "faith without works," as Apostle James teaches, "is dead"—that, according to the same apostle, "pure and undefiled religion" (or rather, as his word should have been rendered, the exercise and outward demonstration of religious sentiments) must imply the visiting of the afflicted, and keeping one's-self unspotted from the world; and that "they who have believed in God," says Paul to Titus, "should be *careful* to maintain good works." All this, I say, may be thought so obvious as not to need being insisted on. But it appears, from some cause or other, a danger did exist, in the times of the apostles, of men's losing sight of all this—a danger, I mean, not merely of their being hurried into sin by

strong temptation, or of their being in utter thoughtlessness about their religion, but also of their being deceived into some notion of being religious without virtue, and hoping to be accounted righteous (as Apostle John expresses it) without "*doing* righteousness." And since this was the case in the Primitive Church, we ought not too hastily to conclude that there can be no such danger now. In fact, there always has been in every age, and always will be while mankind exist, a liability to self-deceit on this point—something quite distinct from our liability to live in a total disregard of duty, or to offend against the suggestions of conscience—a tendency to satisfy and quiet the conscience by making religious duty consist in something quite apart from moral conduct. The piety of the ancient heathen (and the like may be said of the Hindoo idolaters of the present day) had in general little or no connection with morality, and, indeed, in many points sanctioned a gross vice. The Jews again were, we find, prone to place their religion in ceremonial observances, neglecting "the weightier matters of the law;" and the Christians of the apostles' times were also manifestly in danger of being deceived into "continuing in sin that grace might abound," and satisfying themselves with a dead faith which brought forth no fruits, expecting to be accounted righteous without *doing* righteousness.

Any one of us, therefore, who flatters himself that he is quite safe from any like danger, is only the more exposed to it through his careless security.

Indeed, I have myself known a case—and I should be glad to think it a solitary one—of a man who made great pretensions to piety, and who on being reproved by one of my clergy for the gross immorality of his life, replied that he was one of God's people, and that nothing would be imputed to him as sin. But it is plain, both from the teaching of the apostles and from the very reason of the case, that those who are leading a life of Christian virtue on Christian principles, have not, on that ground, any pretence for boasting ["glorying"] as if they could earn and merit salvation for themselves, but must say, even if they have "done all that is commanded them," "We are unprofitable servants, we have but done that which it was our duty to do." And yet, since they are assured that "God is not unrighteous to forget work," they may fully trust in his being faithful to his promises, and "a rewarder of them that diligently seek him," not because they have earned his favour, but because he has promised it. He would not have been unrighteous [unjust] had he made no such promise, since no one could have claimed it as a matter of right. The *making* of the promise is a free gift of his bounty; the *keeping* of a promise, when made, is what cannot but be done by Him who is "faithful and just." But if any one trusts in him for what he has *not* promised—seeking justification through faith in him, without loving him, or professing to love him without that proof of love which he has required, the keeping of

his commandments—if any one professes to be a true branch of the heavenly vine, Christ Jesus, yet takes no care to be a *fruitful* branch, he is deceiving himself, and in danger of being ‘cast forth as a barren branch, and withered.’ Nor is this doctrine anything mysteriously difficult and unaccountable, but is conformable to our own every-day judgment in other matters.

For instance, we may take as an illustration, what may occur, and indeed actually does occur, with respect to the very persons on whose behalf your aid is now solicited.

They are, as you are aware, such poor persons as have been turned out of their employment, and left to perish for want, solely on account of their determining to worship God according to their conscience, and refusing to profess what they do not believe, or to practise what they consider sinful. These persons our Society endeavours to relieve, not by absolute gifts, which would encourage habits of idleness, but by paying them wages for such work as they are capable of. It provides them with the means of subsistence, but requires of them diligent labour. The Society does not seek, as other employers do, to derive from that labour a profit by which to enrich the contributors; but, as a matter of kindness and charity, provides the implements and materials for work, and such instruction in it as may be needful and promises those employed, that provided they are industrious and well conducted, they shall be regu-

larly paid. Now, surely any of these persons will fully calculate on our *fulfilling* the promise thus freely and kindly made. To suppose that they would be forgotten by us, when they have earnestly studied to comply with our directions, would be to regard us as unjust and unfaithful—in short, “unrighteous.”

But would any of them, think you, on receiving the promised payment, be so stupidly arrogant and thankless as to pretend that he had earned our bounty by his own merits; that his work was his own, when we had supplied the implements and the materials, and the instruction as well as the subsistence; and that he could claim wages as a matter of right, for which he had no one to thank but himself? Now such is a faint representation of our case in reference to God—to him in whom “we live, and move, and have our being;” and who has also promised to them that ask him in sincerity the gift of his Spirit, “which helpeth our infirmities,” and who alone enables us to bring forth such fruit as he requires. But again, what if any of the persons I have been speaking of should say, “Since our benefactors have been so kind and bountiful, we will rely wholly on *them*, without using any exertions in learning or in labouring; they have liberally bestowed on us, and can afford to bestow, whatever we need. We have only to be thankful to them, and trust to them for all supplies, without presuming to do anything ourselves; without employing any care or pain?” Should we not utterly disbelieve all the professions

of gratitude and love made by such a person as manifestly empty and insincere? Should we not say to him, "Thou wicked and slothful servant?" But I need not pursue the application any further. You well know what would be thought of such a man, and how he would be dealt with; and you know also, how *you* will be dealt with if your conduct should be like his. You know that as God is not "unrighteous to forget the labour of love," of those who minister to their poor brethren, so; neither will he forget those who shall have neglected that duty; who "have done it not unto one of the least of these his brethren."

But if you feel only as much gratitude for the unspeakably great love and kindness of God our Saviour as you would expect one of the poor persons I have been speaking of to feel towards a benefactor who should have provided for him in this world, you will eagerly and joyfully embrace this opportunity of showing your thankfulness by making to God an acceptable offering of his own gifts to you—a sacrifice which we are assured is well-pleasing to him—and thus glorifying him, the great husbandman, by bringing forth much fruit. As for the particular objects and character of the Society for which your aid is now asked, it will not be necessary for me on this occasion to enter on any full explanations, because most of you probably are sufficiently informed on this point, by the reports which have been printed and circulated. But it is important to repeat frequently and

distinctly, that it is not a proselyting Society, and does not undertake any kind of missionary labours.

Its object, *as a Society*, and apart from the individual members and contributors, is, to mitigate the distresses of those who are suffering temporal loss and privation purely for conscience-sake. It is not as a Protestant, or as a convert, that any one receives aid from the Society, nor even as a Protestant-convert in distressed circumstances, but as an industrious and well-conducted man who has been *excluded* from employment, and left to starvation, merely on religious grounds. And I myself will be ready (I cannot of course answer for others), to aid any such person, whatever might be the religion he felt bound in conscience to embrace. True it is that the persons whose distressed condition did lead to the formation of the Society were, in point of fact, converts to our Church; and I know not at present of any others who are exposed to the like trial. I know of no one who is now suffering persecution from the members of our Church for having conscientiously separated from it. If I did know of such a case, I should be far more grieved than at persecutions on the opposite side; and should hasten to take measures for relieving our Church from such a reproach. But as it is, the persons who actually need protection are Protestant converts. And I am sorry to say that not by Roman Catholics alone, but also by Protestant occupiers and landowners; Protestant converts have been in several instances excluded from employment on

that ground only. The dread of incurring ill-will in the neighbourhood, has prevailed over all Protestant sympathy, as well as over all sentiments of justice and humanity. The Society, however, holds out no bounty on conversions. On the contrary, we wish to prevent any one from obtaining or expecting any temporal advantage from embracing our faith, except from what may arise from his own improved habits of frugality, industry, and temperance. And it was with a view to guard as far as was possible against any expectations or suspicions of this kind, that the title of the Society was, most deliberately and advisedly, fixed on. It is, indeed, quite right and highly important, that societies should exist, whose object is to impart religious truth. In fact, our Church is itself such a society. But too much care cannot be taken to keep every such society quite distinct from any which affords pecuniary relief, lest an appeal to worldly motives should be introduced, or should even be with any reason suspected; and lest we should be supposed to maintain the rights of conscience then only, when the faith adopted is our own.

Now, there is a great number of persons of various persuasions, both Protestants and Roman Catholics, who profess—many of them, we may hope, sincerely—to be advocates for religious liberty, and to hold that no man who is honest and peaceable ought to be punished or molested for serving God according to his conscientious conviction, even though

others may think it an erroneous conviction. And these, however they may deprecate conversions from what they regard as a true faith, cannot feel any objection to the protecting of the rights of conscience. The denying of the right of conscience, *i.e.*, the moral right of private judgment, and maintaining that every man is bound in duty to submit implicitly to the judgment of their church, and is guilty of a grievous sin if he refuse to do so, they may still hold without any inconsistency, that no one ought to be persecuted for his religious errors. But you may meet with some persons not sufficiently accustomed to accuracy of thought and language, who confound together *civil rights* with moral rectitude; and who, when you speak of man's right to adhere to his own religious conviction, will understand you to be putting truth and error on the same level, and teaching that all religions are equally right, and equally acceptable in God's sight. But we do not mean that every man's religion is *right*; only that his neighbours have no right to molest him for it. We do not maintain such an absurdity as that whatever a man has a right to do, he is therefore necessarily right in doing. And you may point out to such persons as I have been alluding to, that parliament, for instance, has an undoubted right to pass or to reject any bill; though it would be absurd to say that they would be equally right whichever they might do, and that to enact or not to enact a law is a matter of indifference. Indeed, it is evident that if, on the one hand, the

right of deciding were not allowed, in either case a parliament would be utterly useless.

Again, the law gives each elector a right to vote for whichever candidate he may prefer. But to infer that all electors possessing this legal right are, therefore, equally right in their judgment, whether they vote for this candidate or for that, would be to say that it is a matter of indifference who is elected.

And, in religious matters, nearly all Protestants are agreed in maintaining the right of private judgment, though they are far from meaning that all men, differing, as we know they do, so widely from each other, are equally right in the judgment they form, or that it is a matter of indifference whether they judge ill or well.

But, in fact, to exercise our judgment on any matter in which we feel a deep interest is a matter of absolute necessity. No one, how much soever he may distrust his own ability to judge rightly, can possibly help judging somehow. He can only transfer his judgment from one point to another. If he is convinced that he is unqualified to judge of the sense of Scripture, or of any points of doctrine or practice, and accordingly resolves to acquiesce, without inquiry, in whatever is taught by his church, be it the Roman or the Greek Church, or any other, he then *has* decided, on his own judgment, two most important points—(1) that he is bound to submit to the guidance of a supposed infallible church; and (2) that the church he has thus submitted to *is* the true and safe guide. The right, and the duty, of private

judgment, arise from its necessity—from being, in one way or in another, unavoidable—and not from any supposed rectitude of the judgment formed. Erroneously many men do decide ; ill qualified for judging rightly they may be ; but judge they must, whether they will or no ; and they are bound to take pains to judge as well as they can, under a deep sense of responsibility, because the responsibility is one not voluntarily incurred, but is what they cannot possibly shake off, how much soever they may wish it.

As for the employment of bribery to obtain proselytes, I have publicly and repeatedly stated that if, in spite of the most diligent precautions, any such cases had occurred, none such had come to our knowledge, or had been specified and proved by those who have put forth vague general accusations.

And from all that has occurred since, I am enabled to repeat that statement now, and to repeat it as one that has received additional confirmation.

It cannot fairly be expected that we should prove a negative. We do not even assert that no Protestants have ever held out temporal inducements to Roman Catholics to receive Protestant instruction. We only say that *our* Society has never done or encouraged anything of the kind. And when, in a friendly manner, I applied, a good while ago, to a gentleman of my acquaintance, who had thrown out such charges, to specify any cases that had come to his knowledge, in order that I might take steps to put a stop to such practices, the only instance he

produced of alleged bribery was one which had occurred sixteen years before the famine began! And every day that passes adds to the presumption that those who continue to bring forward such charges, without giving, when invited to do so, any proof of them, have in reality no proof to give. And this presumption is still further strengthened by their representing me (in various speeches and publications) as having myself accused the clergy of such practices, and rebuked them for their conduct. That this is totally without foundation is well known, indeed, to those who have read what I published on the subject. But this probably never did fall in the way of those to whom such misstatements were addressed. In proportion, however, as the truth becomes known, all persons will learn to distrust altogether those who put forward such audaciously groundless assertions. All sincere and truly upright Roman Catholics, on the other hand, as they have always given me credit for deprecating any attempt to obtain proselytes, or pretended proselytes, by unfair means, so they would, if they really believed that any professed converts *were* won over by bribery, rather rejoice to rid their church (as I should willingly rid mine) of such insincere and mercenary characters. And I may add, that those who are induced to become, or to continue, members of any church, contrary to their conviction, either by bribes or hope of bribes, or by the dread of penal laws (such as once existed in this country), or of any

other kind of persecution, are no great advantage or credit to that church. I myself am inclined to think that persecution, where it stops short of total extermination, is seldom successful in its object. It is like the sun, which, in our Lord's parable of the sower, when it "waxed hot, withered up" the seed that had fallen on a rock, and which "had no depth of earth," but destroyed not that "on the good ground." The careless and the weak-minded, having, as He expresses it, "no root, will in time of temptation fall away."

But the most sincerely earnest-minded will not only themselves bear up against temporal afflictions, but, by the fortitude they exhibit, will be likely to produce an effect on others. Such fortitude will generally—as we see in the early history of Christianity, and in the early history of the Reformation—first excite attention, afterwards sympathy, and perhaps admiration, and ultimately emulation, in those around.

We, however, are not the less bound to endeavour to mitigate the sufferings and trials of those who are exposed to any kind of hardship or danger for conscience sake. And, indeed, one of the designs of Providence in permitting men to be exposed to afflictions of various kinds, and to persecution among the rest, is to exercise the benevolence of their fellow-men in relieving them.

It may be observed that persecution—including under that name every sort of annoyance, loss, or

inconvenience which a man may suffer from others on account of his religion—may be divided into three kinds :—1st, violence done or threatened to person or property ; 2nd, harassing disputations, troublesome remonstrances and solicitations, abuse, derision, curses, and denunciations of Divine wrath, and all annoyances of that description, so far as there is no offence committed that the law can reach ; and 3rd, non-intercourse and privation of employment.

It is only against this last that the Society in question professes to provide succour. As for assaults, robbery, or, in short, any kind of injury against which legal protection and legal remedies are provided, of these we take no cognisance, but leave men to seek for themselves that protection and these remedies. Most inadequate, indeed, unhappily, are the protection and the remedies that are in fact afforded—especially in the workhouses, where the most cruel and brutal outrages are perpetrated with almost entire impunity, because no charge could be established except by the testimony of witnesses who are either unwilling or afraid to give true evidence. And hence, it is the great object with the persecutors generally to leave a poor convert no alternative but of recantation, starvation, or resort to the workhouse, where he will be unceasingly tormented.

But it is only indirectly that our Society can save men from this persecution—namely, by enabling them to subsist by their labour, and thus escape the resort to the workhouse. Directly, in cases of illegal

violence, we do not interfere. And with respect to the second head, men should be instructed and exhorted to fortify themselves, through Divine help, against trials of that kind. Arguments should be met by arguments, and slander by purity of life; reproaches and revilings should be met by gentle and patient firmness, and curses or threats of perdition uttered by man should be met by confident faith in the power and goodness of God.

These trials are what our Divine Master has seen fit that his people should often be exposed to, and should be required to endure in his cause, in order to show how far they are heartily devoted to him; and he has declared, that "whosoever shall be ashamed of him and of his word, in an evil generation, of him will the Son of man be ashamed when he cometh in his glory." From these trials, then, we cannot effectually protect men. Nor would it be right to attempt holding out what may be called counter-vailing temporal motives, to induce a man to support them.

It would not be right, for instance, to counter-balance by pecuniary reward the dread of reproaches and derision, so as to induce any one for the sake of gain to profess openly what we are convinced is his real belief, but which he would otherwise shrink from avowing, when it would expose him to those reproaches. Nor, again, would it be right to resort to anything that is at all of the character of compulsion, to induce men to take the course which we have

reason to think they would really prefer, if left to their own unbiassed choice, but from which they are deterred by threats, and the fear of displeasing those amongst whom they live.

It is vain to say—though it may often, no doubt, be said with truth—that such and such persons would really be themselves inwardly glad of the application of some kind of compulsion, such as might furnish them with a plea by which to mitigate reproaches, and to excuse themselves to some one of whom they stand in awe, by urging that they were obliged to do so-and-so, which, in fact, they were inwardly willing to do. It may be alleged, indeed, and often in a certain sense with truth, that such and such a person is not completely a free agent, and that he would do this or that if left to himself, but that he is under some influence which leads him to act against his own unbiassed judgment. But it is not allowable for others to interfere in such a case, except by reasoning and persuasion. It is, indeed, allowable when the authority he submits to is usurped, to seek to convince him of this. We may urge him to despise threats which we are well assured are empty, and to stand firm against undeserved ridicule or censure, and to throw off all undue influence.

But this is all that is allowable. It is only when illegal physical force is employed to restrain man that we may resort to forcible means for his rescue. If there is any influence which he chooses to submit to (however reluctantly) we must allow him to act

according to that his choice, though convinced that it is not his unbiassed choice. To do otherwise, and to resort to coercion to induce any one to do what we conceive his unbiassed judgment would prefer, would be to introduce a most unwarrantable and dangerous principle, and one whose application might be carried to an indefinite extent, and fill the world with disorder. In fact, it is most emphatically the *rebel's* plea; for in most cases of rebellion the insurgents profess great loyalty towards the sovereign, and a desire only to deliver him from evil counsellors who induce him to act against his better judgment. And such is, also, the usual plea of the invader; for when any country is attacked by a foreign army—as Spain, for instance, twice within the present century, and Rome very recently—it is generally professed to be a step taken for the good of the invaded people, to rescue them not only from a bad government and faulty institutions, but from such as they would themselves, if left to themselves, disapprove, and the invader professes merely a desire to put down those bad advisers who incite them to take arms against their deliverers.

With respect, then, to persecutions (if they are to be called such) of the class I have now been speaking of, we can properly and fairly interfere only by remonstrance to the one party, and by exhortation and encouragement to the other, and by offering sound instruction to both. But when men are punished for following the dictates of their con-

science, by refusing them employment, though honest and industrious, and by abstaining from all dealings with them ; and when it is attempted thus to compel them to abandon their religion in order to avoid starvation, this is a hardship from which, as no law can give relief, so they may, and surely ought to, be relieved by individuals, or a voluntary combination of individuals. It is a case which cannot, I think, be regarded with indifference by any one who has any feelings of humanity, any sense of justice, or any conscientious convictions of his own. And I earnestly call, therefore, on all of you to use your best endeavours to make known and to advocate the claims of a Society so benevolent and so pious in the object it proposes, and so pure and blameless in the means it employs. Then exhort your friends to contribute liberally, according to their means, to the relief of those who have a double claim on you, not only as suffering fellow-creatures, but as sufferers for conscience sake. Your Master now comes to seek fruit on you. Be not you, then, the barren tree on which the fearful sentence will be pronounced, "Cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?" (Luke xiii. 7.) We are now near the end of one of the years which God's providence has granted you for your trial in this world. Which of us who are here present will see the end of another year in this world, neither I nor you can foresee. But if you do live to the end of it, it will have brought you one year nearer to that hour which cannot be very far distant from

any of us, and which *may* be very near, even to the youngest. And this should lead you to consider how, when that hour shall arrive, you will wish to have spent your time and your money now—what kind of employment and what kind of expenditure you will then have least cause to regret. When these thoughts come across you, you will be led to reflect also what a mere speck the whole of this life will then be likely to appear to you in comparison of the vast ocean of eternity which will then be opening on your view; and how little it will then seem to matter whether a man shall have passed through his brief space here below in wealth and worldly enjoyment of every kind, or as the most destitute and helpless that ever craved relief from this Society—whether he shall have been the “rich man, clothed in purple and fine linen, and faring sumptuously every day,” or the “beggar, laid at his gate full of sores, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs that fall from the rich man’s table,” seeking, as so many poor suppliants now seek of you, to be kept from the miseries of want out of their neighbours’ superfluities.

One great advantage, however, there is which those in easy circumstances do possess over the indigent—and the time will come when you will think it the greatest advantage of all, whatever you may think now—it is, that you are enabled to *give* towards the relief of your suffering brethren. Our Blessed Lord has said that “it is *more* blessed to give than

to receive." Now, for the lesser blessing—for the relief which these poor persons *receive*—they are, I believe, for the most part, deeply grateful. For that which our heavenly Master calls a *greater* blessing—that of *giving*—of having it in your *power*, at least, though perhaps by the sacrifice of some personal indulgence, to give to those whom He deigns to call his brethren—to give, in short, to himself, since he condescends so to account it—for this greater blessing your thankfulness ought to be in due proportion greater. Pray, therefore, to Him to endue you with a grateful and a liberal heart, so that you may give “not grudgingly or of necessity, since God loveth a cheerful giver.” And pray also that you may have grace not only to make no boast, either outwardly or in your inward heart, of this or of any good work, but also to make it one ground of especial gratitude that He has deigned to accept such an offering at your hands as a “sacrifice with which he is well pleased;” promising also that “He will not forget your work and labour of love which ye have showed towards his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.”

1 Tim. i. 17—“Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.”

THE VICTORIES OF THE ISRAELITES.

JUDGES iv. 23.

So God subdued on that day Jabin the king of Canaan before the children of Israel.

It is very possible, and far from uncommon, so to study the Scriptures, especially of the Old Testament (and particularly such portions of them as were read in the Lessons for last Sunday), as to derive not so much sound instruction from them as perplexity and mistake.

In the first place, some readers fall into the error of supposing that whatever is recorded as having been said or done by any prophet, or any other person employed by the Lord as his instrument or messenger, is to be regarded as recorded with *approbation*, and as held up for our admiration and imitation. But these, his instruments, were mere fallible mortals, as liable as any others to judge wrong and act wrong, except when speaking or acting according to his express commands. Jael, *e.g.*, whom we have lately read of as treacherously murdering Sisera, whom she had invited into her tent, was guilty of an atrocious act of treachery, aggravated by a breach of hospitality. But though we read that this act of hers was foretold—"that the Lord would sell Sisera

into the hands of a woman"—we are not told that she received any command from the Lord to kill her guest. Deborah, again, and Barak, though commissioned by the Lord to go forth and fight against the Canaanites, were not enjoined by him to praise and bless the author of the murder.

It is not, perhaps, very wonderful that a half-barbarian people, such as the Israelites then were, should, when left to themselves in the phrenzy of the exultation over the downfall of a cruel oppressor, overlook the atrocity of the act by which he was cut off, and, in the bitterness of their feelings, should praise any one who had in any way contributed to avenge their wrongs. Just so, many of the Romans who had suffered under the tyranny of Julius Cæsar (and some who were far from being, on the whole, the worst characters) praised Brutus for having treacherously assassinated Cæsar, who had trusted him. But if it be taken for granted that because Deborah was a prophetess, and had received a Divine command as to one point, therefore everything she said or did must be regarded as commanded and approved by the Lord, we shall have an opening (as has been too often rashly done) for the cavils of unbelievers, and put a stumbling-block in the way of the Christian.

Another very common and very hurtful mistake is that of not keeping distinct the Old dispensation and the New, the system under which the Israelites were placed, and that which succeeded it, and under which we live.

If, as too many do, we confuse together the two dispensations, of the old law and the Gospel, applying indiscriminately to Jews and to Christians what relates to the Jews alone, or to Christians alone, we shall be making up an anomalous system of religion quite unlike both Judaism and Christianity, but containing an inconsistent medley of the two. The Jews of old fell in some degree into this mistake, by taking for granted that the kingdom of heaven, which the promised Messiah or Christ was to establish, was to resemble the Lord's former kingdom in many points in which it differed from it. And this proved the greatest stumbling-block to those to whom the Gospel was first preached. They looked for a temporal kingdom, a system of temporal rewards and punishments, a triumphant Christ who should establish a kingdom of this world, and deliver them from the Roman yoke; and a kingdom in which the Israelites by blood—the children of Abraham after the flesh—were to hold the highest rank. And, accordingly, when Jesus came in humility and with a rejection of all temporal power, and submitting to persecution and to an ignominious death, they regarded this as a sign that he could not be God's favoured servant, the promised Messiah. According to the prophecy of Isaiah, when they saw "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," they did esteem him. Now it is certainly something more strange and less excusable that Christians should so often make a similar mistake with those Jews, and should even

superadd another to it. I mean by applying to the Jewish dispensation also what belongs exclusively to the Gospel, as well as by transferring to the Gospel what refers exclusively to the Mosaic law. There are not a few who can speak of a Christian place of worship as a *Temple*, and introduce altars and sacrifices into the Gospel scheme; and whereas the Mosaic law was a system of temporal rewards and punishments only, and it was the Gospel that brought life and immortality to light, and taught us to look for the blessings and judgments that are to come after death, we may find many confusedly blending the two systems together, and speaking as if both the Israelites of old, and Christians also, were to look for both—for temporal judgments and rewards, and likewise for those of a future state in addition. Now, Scripture, I say, if studied in this confused manner, will bewilder and mislead instead of instructing us.

To read the Bible—or, indeed, to study any other book—with profit, it is indispensably necessary to consider when, and where, and to what persons each precept or direction is applicable, and what are the circumstances of the respective parties respecting whom anything is narrated. But if we do use this caution, we shall find that much is to be learned even from the histories of persons very differently circumstanced from ourselves.

The narrative now before us is one out of a great number, all very much of the same character, which

occupy, indeed, the greatest part of the book of Judges, and a considerable portion of the following books.

The children of Israel, after being settled in the good land which had been promised them, were often forgetful of God's mercies, and transgressed the commandments by falling into the abominable idolatries of the surrounding nations. His blessing was in consequence withdrawn *from* them whenever they thus disobeyed the law; and they incurred those punishments which had been denounced in the Mosaic law; enemies were raised up against them, from among the neighbouring nations, who overcame them with ease when thus forsaken by their God, and trampled them under foot with the most dreadful oppression. But when they became duly sensible of their sin, and seemed resolved to forsake it, and turn to the Lord their God with earnest entreaties for pardon, he then raised up among them some deliverer, through whom he gave them help and victory, their enemies being discomfited before them, as easily as they themselves had formerly been overthrown for their rebellion; and they were restored to God's favour till they forfeited it anew (as was generally the case in the succeeding generation) by some fresh apostacy, which was punished as before. And thus did God make good to them the word he had spoken by the mouth of his servant Moses, declaring that their enemies should never be able to stand before them so long as they obeyed the Lord their God, but that they should be blessed with victory through his especial and

promised help, as well as with every other kind of worldly prosperity. The proof to all the earth that there was a God in Israel depended on this, since such was the promise they had received from him; and it was no less necessary that his threatenings in case of disobedience should also be fulfilled; and that when they were disobedient they should no less certainly be smitten before their enemies, and oppressed by them, and visited with famine and pestilence, and every kind of temporal calamity.

Now it is a subject of the highest importance whether this system is to be considered as peculiar to the Jewish nation, or whether the same plan of Divine government extends to all the world; whether, in short, *we* are to expect or not that prosperity and worldly success shall always attend obedience to God's will, and that our sins will be visited with temporal judgments, such as defeat by enemies, &c.

It is indeed strange that there should be any question at all on the subject; so plainly does it appear, both from Scripture and experience, that the system of government by regular temporal reward and punishment was peculiar to the Jewish nation. But it is certain that many persons do entertain a belief of temporal judgments and temporal success being still distributed according to men's deserts; and this error is the more important because it cannot but lead men to judge uncharitably of any of their neighbours who may happen to suffer any awful and striking calamity; and to conclude from the worldly

prosperity which they themselves, or any one else, may enjoy, that they are approved in the sight of God. It will be worth while, therefore, though I have noticed this fact more than once in some former discourses, to call your attention to it again on account of the important consequences depending on it.

That the system of Divine government which I am speaking of was altogether confined to the Israelites, and must not be considered as now in force, is plain from the very manner in which it was announced to them. Moses repeatedly points out to them that they were under an especial, extraordinary, and miraculous Providence—that there was no nation like unto them, and that they were separated from all the nations of the world to be the Lord's peculiar people. Now, if other nations had been governed according to the same system, the Israelites would *not* have been the Lord's peculiar people, but would have been in this respect the same as the Gentiles. Moreover, it is to be observed; that it was one of the judgments denounced against them that their enemies should conquer and oppress them; and that, on the other hand, they were promised victory over all their enemies when they were obedient to God's laws; and, accordingly, we find the neighbouring nations subduing them, and subdued by them, gaining the most signal victories over them, and as signally defeated by them, according as they (the Israelites) obeyed or transgressed the command-

ments of the Lord. These nations, therefore, appear to have experienced alternate good and ill success, not according to their *own* deserts, but according to the deserts of the Israelites. Jabin, King of Canaan, prevailed against them when they fell into idolatry, and grievously oppressed them twenty years; the Lord delivered them out of his hand; and they utterly destroyed his empire. On another occasion, afterwards, they again did evil in the sight of the Lord, and the Midianites overcame them; and, again, after that, the Ammonites; and the children of Israel cried unto the Lord, and put away the idols from among them, and the Lord delivered his people by the hand of Gideon, and of Jephtha, and destroyed their enemies. Now we can hardly suppose that all these people—the Canaanites, and the Midianites, and the Ammonites, the Philistines, and the rest who are mentioned—were each of them peculiarly fit to obtain the Divine favour at the time when they were thus successful over the Israelites, and had again become peculiarly worthy of Divine chastisement when they were overthrown by the Israelites. We know that they were all along gross and abominable idolaters, ignorant of the true God, and not designing to obey his commands, though they were instruments in his hands for the chastisement of his people. It was for *their* (the Israelites') sakes, as the whole tenor of the history plainly shows, that these nations were raised up, and afterwards overthrown; and the victories they obtained over the Israelites were, in

consequence of *their* evil desert, not of their own good desert.

The nations of the old world, therefore, were evidently not under the same system of Divine government by temporal rewards and punishments which was established over the Israelites; nor is that system to be looked for as pertaining to the Christian world. The Gospel holds out to us no promise of long life, and riches, and victory, and other temporal advantages, as a reward of obedience, nor denounces worldly adversity and misery to the unbelieving or rebellious; its promises and threats are of a higher nature, relating to the world to come, in which men will be rewarded or punished according to their behaviour in this life. The prospect of a future state (as I endeavoured to show in a former discourse) was not revealed to the Jews in their law, whatever their private notions might be on the subject. It was necessary, therefore, that the law should be sanctioned by temporal rewards and punishments, and that they should be under the extraordinary providence of God, who thus assumed the office of King or temporal governor, as well as God, of that particular people. But under the Gospel dispensation there was no need for this system of extraordinary providence being established, because the hopes and fears of appearing before Christ's tribunal, at the last day, to give an account of our lives and receive our final doom, are pronounced by the Divine decree to amply suffice for those who will but listen

to the warning given them for keeping men steady in their obedience to God, whatever may be their lot in this world. I say, God's decree has pronounced these inducements sufficient, inasmuch as it is an undeniable *fact* that nothing more has been by his providence provided:

It is equally an error either to suppose that the rewards and punishments of the next life formed the sanction of the Mosaic law, or, that temporal reward and punishment form the sanction of the Gospel. The two systems (as I have often had occasion to remark to you, and it cannot be too strongly enforced) are quite distinct, and must not be confounded together. Observe only the different manner in which the two were respectively founded, which may sufficiently indicate their difference in this respect. Moses, the Jewish lawgiver, prevailed against the mighty king of Egypt, who perished with his host, and brought out the children of Israel in triumph, with signs and wonders: they went forth, as he tells us, with a high hand, and they went forth with silver and gold, the wages of their long servitude, which the Egyptians bestowed on them with trembling, as they entreated them to depart. He led them through the wilderness with their numerous flocks and herds, preserved from famine and from drought, and from the robber-tribes who attacked them. Under Moses they prevailed against the Amalekites and the Midianites and the Ammonites, and conquered part of the land of their inheritance—as much as lay on that

side of Jordan ; and then he committed them to the care of Joshua (or Jesus, as in New Testament for Joshua), who was to lead them to further victories till they should be in possession of the good land that had been promised them. Our Lord, on the contrary, the author and finisher of our faith, was born in a low station, was familiar with hardships from his very birth, passed his life under poverty and persecutions, and ended it by an ignominious death. "We did esteem him," says the prophet ; thus giving a plain proof to his followers, that his kingdom was not of this world, and that they must look for no temporal rewards for serving him, but must set their affection "on things above, not on things on the earth ;" and He bequeathed to his disciples the same kind of life : "In the world," said He, "ye shall have tribulation" (John xvi. 33) ; and, accordingly, they spent their lives in hardships, dangers, and sufferings, and ended them mostly by a violent death.

No one who sufficiently considers these circumstances can expect that a religion, whose Founder was crucified, and whose first ministers were persecuted and put to death by the most prosperous people on earth, should be sanctioned and supported by the regular distribution of temporal prosperity and adversity.

It is true there were, at the first beginning of the Christian Church, a few instances of individual temporal deliverances and judgments, such as the deliverance of Peter out of prison, the death of Ananias

and Sapphira, the fall of Jerusalem, and the greater part of the Christian miracles. But these were intended as signs to attest the truth of the revelation when first it was proclaimed; and there were just enough of these miracles wrought to answer this purpose, and they ceased as soon as sufficient proof had been given. But even at the very time of these miracles, judgments, and deliverances, they were rather exceptions to the general rule than a part of it; they did not amount to a system of temporal rewards and punishments, but, on the contrary, the Christians had on the whole a harder lot in this world than their enemies, "If in this life only," says St. Paul, "we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." Indeed, the sufferings which the early Christians generally underwent, answered the very same purpose as their actual deliverances, viz., that of serving to attest the truth of their doctrine, as far at least as their sincerity was concerned; since no one will undergo persecution for what he really does not believe; and whatever attested the sincerity of the apostles, attested the *truth* of what they said; for they reported miracles, of which they had been eye-witnesses, and where there was no room for mistake. In the present day God seems to have pronounced that there is no longer any occasion either for such persecutions or for miraculous deliverances, and other signs, to attest the truth of the Gospel; the testimony of the apostles and prophets is enough to satisfy all who are candidly disposed, and that is all that is intended.

As we are not, therefore, to expect any interference of a special providence in our favour in worldly concerns, so neither have we, generally speaking, persecutions in the same degree, at least, as of old, for righteousness sake, to apprehend in these days; on the contrary, we may expect, as a general rule, a greater share of worldly goods and exemption from many worldly evils by leading a Christian life. Not that this will take place by an extraordinary but by an ordinary providence; not by special judgments and blessings interfering with the regular course of God's government, but in and by that very regular course itself. Industry, and temperance, and honesty, and benevolence, and patience, have a general tendency to produce riches, and health, and credit, and quiet, in this world; as well as God's favour, if they are practised out of love to Him. For these virtues, and their contrary vices, have a tendency to produce corresponding effects; but still there are many exceptions to the general rule; and these we should be prepared for, not thinking that we are forsaken of God if we fall into any misfortunes, nor concluding that every one who is successful is the object of his favour on that account; but remembering that we have here no abiding place, and that Christ's "kingdom is not of this world." As for the providential deliverances and mighty judgments we are to look for; and the triumphs over enemies, they are of a different kind from those bestowed on the Israelites, corresponding indeed to

theirs, but far greater and more glorious. The land of Canaan prefigures and represents the heavenly inheritance which the Christian is taught to look for beyond the grave; the idolatrous people which we have to conquer, is man's own corrupt, unregenerate nature. We must root out with an unsparing hand all the abominable inhabitants of the land; we must cast out and destroy the accursed thing, and throw down the altars, and burn the idols—*i.e.* we must crucify the old man, and mortify the deeds of the flesh, and declare unsparing war against all our sinful propensities, and all the frivolous vanities of the world, and against everything which may stand in the way of our sincere and hearty devotedness to the Lord our God. And surely he will deliver us out of the hand of our enemies, and will give us victory by the strength of his Spirit over all the temptations that beset us,—against sin, the world, and the devil, against which we promised in our baptism to fight manfully. And He will finally establish in our hearts his true, and spiritual, and holy temple, and dwell in us. He will come unto us, and make his abode in us to the end of our lives, that we may become fit for being admitted into his more immediate presence, when the time of our trial on earth shall be expired, and we shall enter into the eternal rest which remaineth for the people of God.

THE VEIL OF THE TEMPLE.

HEBREWS X. 19—22.

Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he had consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh, and having an high priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith.

THE necessity of studying the scriptures of the Old Testament, and of studying them aright, for all who would gain any clear knowledge of the New, is a truth which I have indeed often laboured to impress on your minds, but which appears to me more and more essential to be insisted on the longer I reflect on the subject and the more I look around at the Christian world. Fresh and fresh proofs continually occur to me, in considering the subject itself, of the vast importance of an acquaintance with the history of the law of the Israelites in explaining the doctrines of the Gospel. When I look around, the neglect, or, which is equally bad, the entire mistaking, of those scriptures which so generally prevails, is continually forced upon my attention. Those who consider the books of Moses and the rest of the Old Testament as suited only for the Jews of former days,

and of no use to Christians, except, perhaps, for, such as are curious speculators in antiquities, and those again who confound together into one common mass all the books indiscriminately, both Old and New Testament, applying whatever they find in Scripture, without regard to the dispensation, literally and directly to Christians of this day,--both these classes of men, I say, are labouring under an error which will render it next to impossible for them to gain a clear insight into the Gospel system. The one party, those who neglect the Old Testament and are ignorant of the explanation it so often affords of the New, are in many points left in total darkness; while the opposite party (those who confound the two together) are misled by a false light. And yet one would think that even the bare perusal of the New Testament (at least the Epistles) might serve to correct these mistakes; for nothing can be more clearly pointed out in them than that the Mosaic law was a preparation for the Gospel, and had "a shadow of good things to come" (Heb. x. 1), and that it was done away, and came to an end, by being fulfilled in the Gospel: for this alone, I say, it might appear both that the system under which the Israelites lived does not apply to us Christians, and also that some knowledge of that system must be necessary for the understanding of the Gospel; and, besides, that some acquaintance with the sacraments and other ordinances of the Jews must be to all persons a requisite for the right understanding of the Gospel,

to which those ordinances were preparations, and that therefore the Scripture writers must for that reason alone have been obliged to make reference to the Jewish service. Besides, I say, this necessity, it should be remembered that all the Scripture writers were all of themselves Jews, and were therefore quite familiar with the law and history of Israel, and full of it, and likely to refer to it, not only as often as necessary, but almost as often as possible; especially as they all of them, except St. Paul, wrote principally for Jews, and he mostly to such Gentiles as had multitudes of Jews living among them, believers and unbelievers, and who, through them, were well acquainted with all that concerned the Jews. Considering, then, that all the teachers of our religion (whose works have come down to us), from Jesus Christ himself downwards, were Jews, we may well expect that their discourses should be but ill understood by those who have little or no knowledge of the discipline the Jews lived under, as shown in the Old Testament, or who make a confused medley of that and the Gospel system.

But though all the Scripture writings of the New Testament do thus abound with allusions to the law and history of the Jews, this, of course, is especially the case with St. Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews (*i.e.* Jews), the greater part of which is utterly dark and unmeaning to one who has not a considerable familiarity with the whole Jewish history and system, and among the rest with the worship in the temple.

And he who is thus a stranger to the Epistles, is a stranger to one of the fullest and most valuable expositions of the Gospel which alone has the words of eternal life. Having, then, selected the passage before us, I propose to explain some particulars relative to the veil of the temple, which we are told by the Evangelist was "rent in twain," and which St. Paul says was the flesh—*i.e.* the life of Jesus, who, by thus giving his body to be broken, by this sacrifice of his life opened to us a passage into the true Holy of Holies—most holy place—*i.e.* into the presence of God in heaven.

I have selected this passage partly as being one of which many persons may be likely not to understand the full signification, or to estimate the full importance. Many wonderful signs are recorded by St. Matthew as having taken place at the moment of our Lord's death—the earthquake, the cleaving of rocks, and the resurrection of the bodies of holy men from their graves; but St. Mark, whose narrative is more abridged, mentions only this one, which is by no means the least remarkable.

In order to understand fully the signification of this miraculous rending of the veil of the temple, it is requisite to consider what that veil was, and what purpose it answered. The inmost recess of the temple, which was called the "most holy," or "Holy of Holies," was separated from the rest of the house by a magnificent veil, which completely concealed it from all the people; which veil was never passed but

by the high-priest, and by him only once a-year, to make a solemn atoning sacrifice for the people, on what was called the day of expiation, the daily sacrifices and ordinary prayers being offered up in an outer part of the temple. "Into the second"—*i.e.* the holiest—says St. Paul, "went the high-priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and the errors of the people."

Now, this Holy of Holies was a figurative representation of heaven, and the people were not allowed to enter into nor even to view it, in order to signify to them that no man is of himself worthy or fit to enter into the presence of God, but must approach only through the person of a mediator, which appointed mediator was the high-priest offering up a sacrifice on his behalf. And so high was the reverence in which this sacred place was held, that the Jews regarded no profanation so shocking as the attempt of any one besides the high-priest on the appointed day attempting to pass this solemn boundary. Great indeed, therefore, must have been their astonishment and dismay to behold this sacred veil at our Lord's death suddenly, and by no human hand, rent asunder from the top to the bottom. Let us, my brethren, look through this opening, and endeavour to discern the mysteries thus exposed to our view. Behind that veil lie wonders enough to overpower our souls with astonishment, mercies enough to melt our hearts with gratitude and love. The mysteries of the Mosaic law are there thrown

open to us, and the application of them to the Gospel covenant explained. In order, then, to understand the prospect before us, so as rightly to interpret the miracles, we must bear in mind, that as the Holy of Holies represented heaven, so the high-priest entering into it with an atoning sacrifice was a type intended to signify the great Jesus Christ offering up the sacrifice of himself for the redemption of the world. He was our great High-priest, and was also the Victim offered, as St. John Baptist proclaimed him, "The Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." (John i. 29.) It was ordered that the Lamb that was offered in sacrifice to the Lord should be without spot or blemish, to signify that Jesus, who was the sacrifice to be offered up for our redemption, was without any blemish or taint of sin. "He," as St. Paul says, "offered himself without spot to God." And when He went up into the Divine presence thus to present himself as the only true, efficacious, and worthy sacrifice for sin—at the very moment of his completing this mysterious offering, which He himself announced by his last remarkable words, "It is finished"—notice was given that the work was done by the veil of the temple being rent in twain, and the Holy of Holies being thus laid open, to signify that at that moment and thenceforward the kingdom of heaven was open to all believers.—that God's favour was no longer confined to the Jewish nation, but that all people should henceforward enjoy it. The rending of this veil was a sign that all

was finished—that all which had been foretold and pre-figured for so many ages before was now accomplished, the promises to the fathers were made good, the words of the prophets were fulfilled, the types and figures of the Mosaic law, which had the shadow of good things to come, were explained, the law itself came to an end, and was succeeded by the Gospel.

Doubtless the rending of that veil was heard both in heaven and in hell; doubtless angels heard it with awe and with exultation, and again raised their triumphant hymn of glory to God; and demons trembled at the sound which gave signal that their empire was abolished, except over those who will be their slaves; and that a way was opened for mankind to escape their power by enlisting under the standard of the Cross, and taking refuge with their Redeemer. “It is finished,” said Christ at that moment; the Holy of Holies is thrown open; its sanctity is destroyed; heaven itself opens its gates to Christians, who, by treading in the steps of their Master, and putting their trust in Him, may enter where He is gone to prepare a place for them. “It is finished;” the shadows are passed away, and the reality of the good things of the Gospel is arrived; the carnal ordinances, as St. Paul calls them, are at an end—“the hour cometh,” said Jesus to the woman of Samaria, “when neither on this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem shall men worship the Father: God is a Spirit; and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and truth”—*i.e.*, the outward and visible

sacrifices, and rites, and ceremonies, and purifications of the old covenant, which had a hidden meaning in reference to the Gospel, are all done away; not by being destroyed, but by being fulfilled; they have performed their office; their meaning is explained, and their use is taken away by the Gospel. "A new and living way" is henceforth opened; for "I am the way," says Jesus, "and the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by Me." At this moment therefore the kingdom of God, which St. John Baptist and our Lord himself had announced as being at hand, had actually commenced. The great atonement was then accomplished, by the Christian religion then began. Such is the view which the Scriptures lead us to take of the miraculous rending of the veil of the temple. The Epistle to the Hebrews is particularly full in the explanation of the signification of the Jewish sacrifices, their reference to the sacrifice of Christ, the abolition of them, and his death, and the objects which his death accomplished. The apostle remarks that the law had only the "shadow of good things to come;" that its ceremonies and atoning sacrifices had only an *outward* purifying efficacy; "sanctified," as he expresses it, "to the purifying of the flesh"—*i.e.* made the worshippers ceremonially pure in the sight of God, so that they might be admitted to worship Him publicly according to the ordinances he had established in that law; but that the real efficacy in purifying the soul from sin belonged not to those

sacrifices themselves (which were to be done away), but to that which was signified by them, that offering of the Son of God. That the real efficacy did not belong to them, is shown, he says, by their being appointed to be repeated year after year, as if to keep up the expectation of that true sacrifice whose atoning power was such that it needed not to be repeated—the offering of Christ once for all. And the same is proved also, he says, by the priests under the law being men subject to sin and infirmity, and therefore not worthy to make any atonement that should of itself have efficacy to save men from sin; the washings and ceremonial purifications which were appointed for them being figurative only, and typical of the real sinless purity of the atoning Saviour whom they represented. And their entering with the blood of the lamb, through the veil, into the holiest part of the temple, was intended, he says, to signify Christ's presenting to the Father the offering of his own life. "Into the second tabernacle," says he, "went the high priest alone, once every year." (Heb. ix. 7.) He further explains to us what was signified by the employment of blood in purifying under the Mosaic law, and of the peculiar sanctity which attached to it. Part of the explanation of this is, indeed, given in the law itself. The Israelites were forbidden, under the severest penalties, to eat any flesh with the blood, because, says the law, "the blood is the life:" *i.e.* the blood being essential to the life of all animals, and

being that from which all other parts of the body are formed and supplied, was chosen as the most suitable visible sign or emblem of life itself; and it was to be held sacred, not eaten, but used in sacrifice, and offered up before the Lord, as a token that, by the offering up of a life to him, his favour was hereafter to be obtained, and atonement made for the world. And it is remarkable that hence this notion of the sanctity and atoning power of blood was borrowed by the idolatrous nations of old, and is to be found among some such nations to this day, though perverted, and mingled with absurd and often cruel superstitions. Thus, the heathens of old, we know, made offerings of the blood of animals to their idols: and not only this, but, following their own wild and abominable devices, they thought that human blood must be the most precious and acceptable to their gods; and hence human sacrifices were among the horrible enormities of the idolatrous Canaanites, in which the Israelites themselves were seduced to copy them: they “shed innocent blood, even the blood of their sons and of their daughters” (Ps. cvi. 38); and again, they offered “their sons and their daughters unto devils.”

Sometimes, too, these idolaters thought that the shedding of human blood, though without destroying life, would render their gods propitious. Thus you read of the priests of Baal cutting themselves “after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them.” (1 Kings xviii. 28.) All

these shocking abominations were but the perversion of that institution existing indeed from the earliest ages of the world, but so strongly insisted on in the Mosaic law, that atonement and purification from sin should be made by blood. "It is the blood," says Moses, "that maketh atonement for sin;" but his law carefully guarded against the horrible perversions of the heathens by strictly requiring that what was employed should be pure blood, *i.e.* the blood of what he enumerated as *clean* beasts and birds, which alone were allowed to be eaten by the Israelites, and which alone were allowed to be offered in sacrifice. All other animals were so far from having under the law this purifying efficacy, that the touch of either a human dead body or of the carcase of any unclean beast, was reckoned a legal pollution, which obliged a person to have recourse to a certain prescribed ceremonial purification. Among many instances of the care taken to keep up this distinction, which was so essential for the purpose of making every part of the Mosaic ceremonies point to prefigure the redeeming sacrifice of the spotless Lamb of God, I will notice one, because it is a direction so minute and seemingly insignificant, that it is likely to be overlooked. Moses, in speaking of that ordinance by which every first-born male was dedicated to the Lord, which ordinance, like most of the rest, had two meanings, looking both backwards and forwards—backwards, to that delivery from the Egyptian plague which smote all the first-born, both of man

and beast; and forward, to the sacrifice of the first-born and only-begotten Son of God. Now the manner of that dedication was to be different, according to the different nature of the creature in question. The first-born males of the sheep or of any other clean beasts were to be offered in sacrifice before the Lord, because these lawfully *might* be offered; their first-born sons, again, since these could not be sacrificed, were to be *redeemed* by the blood of some clean animal in their stead; for, being devoted to the Lord, they were held accursed unless blood was offered for them; for “without shedding of blood,” says St. Paul, “there is no remission of sins;” and as their own blood could not be accepted, that of a lamb, or of a pair of turtle doves, or two young pigeons, was substituted, according to the law; which offering, as you may remember, was made, in conformity to the law, for our Saviour, being a first-born son. Then, with respect to the first-born males of unclean beasts, such as the camel and the ass, the same rule of redemption was established. Since they could not lawfully be sacrificed, the offering of a clean animal was to be made in their stead, as you may read, Ex. xxxiv. 20, “the firstling of an ass” (and the same no doubt of a camel) “thou shalt redeem with a lamb.” But here a distinction was made by way of indulgence. If they did not think the animal worth the cost of a lamb to redeem it, they were allowed to destroy it instead, though it could not be offered as a sacrifice. But the precise mode of doing this was

prescribed, for a very particular reason ; and this is the passage to which I wish to call your attention :—The “firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb ; and if thou redeem it not, then thou shalt break his neck.” (Exod. xiii. 13.) You may be sure there was a reason for this minute and particular direction ; and the more you study the Mosaic law, the better you will perceive the reasons even of what seems most unreasonable, the signification of what seems most insignificant. The reason of this direction may be understood from what has just been said. The animal’s neck was to be broken, that it might die in its blood ; because “without shedding of blood is no remission.” (Heb. ix. 22.) And this was meant as a token of that most awful truth, that whoever is not redeemed dies in his sins. Redeemed, that is, by pure blood ; not his own—because no man is perfect, and pure, and meritorious in God’s sight ; not, again, the blood of bulls and goats, because they only bestowed a legal and ceremonial purity under the law ; but the blood of Jesus Christ, the true Lamb of God. It is from the circumstances I have just mentioned that the virtue and efficacy of Christ’s death as an atonement—his laying down his life for us—is continually spoken of and alluded to in the New Testament by the expression of his blood, as in a passage I lately quoted, and numberless others ; and hence it is also that He himself speaks of the benefits received by those who apply to themselves this sacrament, and are sanctified and

purified by his atonement, under the figure of eating his flesh and drinking his blood. "Verily, verily, I say unto you except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, ye have no life in you: whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day; for my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him." (John vi.) His hearers at the time did not understand him, though he so far instructed them at the time as to add, "My flesh is my life, which I will give for the life of the world;" and explaining also that it was not of his real literal flesh that we are to partake, but of his spirit, of which that is a figure. "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing." But his disciples were taught afterwards by his death, and by the explanation given them by the Holy Spirit of that event, that his blood was mentioned to denote his life which was laid down for them, and the receiving of flesh and blood signified the application to them of that sacrament, and his dwelling spiritually in the hearts of the faithful; and hence, in appointing as a means by which this benefit is to be conveyed to us, the solemn commemoration of his sacrifice, which we call the Lord's Supper, he called the bread and wine which he appointed to be received at that feast his body and blood, saying, "Drink ye all of it, for this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission

of sins." (Matt. xxvi. 27.) And so also St. Paul says, "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?" (1 Cor. x. 16.) All which indicates in the clearest and most forcible manner that all the sacrifices of blood in the law, and more especially that most solemn annual one within the veil, were representations of the sacrifice of Christ, which opened heaven to all believers. He adds that Christ himself is represented by the veil, because he is the new and living way, and "through him we have access to the Father," his body being broken and slain for our admission, at the very moment when the veil of the temple was rent so that all might pass through it; "having, therefore," says he, "boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith." And as the blood of the Mosaic sacrifices was necessary for the outward legal purification of the worshippers, so, he tells us, was that which was represented by those sacrifices (*viz.*, the atonement of Christ) necessary for that which was represented by the legal purification, *viz.*, for the sanctification of Christians with salvation. "For when Moses," says he, "had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both

the book and all the people, saying, This is the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you." (Heb. ix. 19, 20.)

Now, it is to be observed that what St. Paul undertakes to clear up and explain is the mysteries of the Mosaic sacrifice and institutions, not of the Christian ; he points out the reference they all bore to the death of Christ, which they signified and were appointed on purpose to signify ; but in what way the sacrifice itself of Christ, the death of the just for the unjust, avails as an atonement for sin, is a mystery which he does *not* profess fully to clear up, and which will be fully cleared up probably in another world, but not in this. And it is most important to bear this in mind, and not, as some are apt to do, to confound together explanation (which the Scriptures do give us) of what the Mosaic law signified and (what the Scriptures do not give us) an explanation of the *things themselves* so signified and foreshown. Enough, however, is made known to us to set in the strongest point of view God's deep abhorrence of sin, since the world could not be redeemed from it but by that voluntary sacrifice of the Just One. Enough is revealed to us to excite, if we have any heart at all and will lay those things to heart, our warmest gratitude for the unspeakable goodness of Him who laid down his life for us ; and enough is explained to make us wise unto salvation, to point out to us the new and living way by which, and by which alone, we can be admitted into the presence of God. It is

grievous to think that so many as are ready to crave after fuller explanation and more knowledge than is allowed them, there are so few who will use and apply the knowledge which they have, or which is placed within their reach. The veil is rent and the Holy of Holies is thrown open—what does this avail those who will not enter in? who “*will not*” (as our Lord himself complained) “come unto him that they might have life?” Besides the multitude of those who have scarcely ever thought of asking the question, “What must I do to be saved?” there are multitudes willingly deceived in a point where no one need be deceived, in the answer to that question. Some think that if they profess with their lips their trust in God’s mercy through Christ, and abstain from any heinous sins, or at least from all that they have no particular inclination to, and are as good as men in general, this is what they must do to be saved, without even thinking of a “full assurance of faith,” a fervent and constant love for their Redeemer, shown, as he expressly charges us, in the zealous obedience to his commands, and a heart filled with his Holy Scriptures. Some persuade themselves that what they must do to be saved is to resolve to serve God at some future time, when they shall be tired of serving the world, the flesh, and the devil. Some think their faith, and their fervent feelings, and their talking much about religion, will afford them a license to continue in sin, never thinking of “having their hearts sprinkled from an evil con-

science." Some make light attendance of the solemn ordinance of the Lord's Supper, in which they are invited to testify their faith in the blood of Christ, and to receive the benefits of his death: they are afraid, then, to avail themselves of the gracious offer of God's mercy, and yet (strange inconsistency) are not afraid to await his judgment without it.

All these, and many more self-deceivers, fancy that they are sure of entering into the holy presence of God, and yet by their own wilfulness are shut out. Let each consider for himself whether he is himself coming unto Jesus as he ought, and truly entering in by the new and living Way; and if not, let him remember before it is too late that the greater the mercy offered, the heavier judgment awaits him who treads those mercies under foot.

"He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace."

CHRISTIAN FAITH AND CHRISTIAN DUTY.

TITUS ii. 11.

*The grace of God, which bringeth salvation, hath
appeared to all men.*

THE whole passage of which I have given the first few words contains a brief, but distinct, summary of Christian doctrine, as complete as is to be found in any part of Scripture. It puts before us what the Christian is required to *believe*, and what to do; and what has been done for us, and what we are on our part to perform; our *hopes*, our motives, and our *duties*, all compressed into a very few words. Now, some may perhaps be disposed to ask why it could have been necessary to put this outline of Christian doctrine before *Titus*, who must of course have been thoroughly instructed in Gospel truths before he was appointed an overseer (what we now call bishop) of the Church in Crete. No doubt it was designed to furnish him not only with a reminder for himself, but also with an *authority* for the teaching of his people. It was doubtless meant that they as well as he should see the apostle's epistle, and that he should be enabled, in case of any doubt or opposition arising, to point to the apostle's own words, and show that

he was teaching what he had been expressly commissioned to teach. The words which I have taken as a text differ slightly in sense from the original. The exact meaning is (as is plain from the *order* in which the words stand in the original) not “hath *appeared* to all men,” but “salvation to all men.” And again, in a passage which occurs just after, it is less doubtful in our translation whether there is *one* “appearing” spoken of or *two*—one of the “Great God” and another of our Saviour. But the original leaves no such doubt; it *can* only mean that our Saviour Jesus Christ is the great God.

The whole passage, therefore, according to its exact sense, will stand thus, “There hath appeared the grace of God bringing salvation to all men, teaching us (or rather training us as children, which is the exact force of the original) in order that renouncing ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, looking for the blessed hope, even the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” In this short summary there is wrapped up so much precious instruction that every line of it deserves attentive study. I have already observed that it plainly alludes to the Divine nature of Jesus Christ, whom it calls “our great God and Saviour.” It also alludes to his atoning *sacrifice* when it speaks of him as having “given himself for

us," which cannot mean merely that He was a moral teacher who braved persecution and death in the cause of truth, since this is what was done by Paul himself and the other apostles, none of whom is spoken of as having "given himself for us." The apostle points out too, you will observe, that our salvation is from the *grace*, the free favour of God, not from any claim of merit on our part, as if the Most High should have any need of our services, or could derive any benefit to himself from our good works. Yet he does not, again, allow us to doubt that good works are required of us, and that we are bound to be zealous of them, inasmuch as Christ "gave himself for us to 'redeem us from all iniquity'"—*i.e.* not merely from the *penalty* of sin, but from sin itself. And he briefly mentions the three heads of duty, to the practice of which we are to be trained—our duty as relates to *ourselves*, to our *neighbours*, and to *God*: the Christian is to live *soberly* (*i.e.* with temperance and purity), *righteously* (*i.e.* justly), and again *godly* (*i.e.* piously towards God). These same heads of duty are recounted, though in a different order, in the General Confession in our Prayer-Book, when we pray "that we may hereafter live a godly, righteous, and sober life." Thus the apostle guards against the error (as he does also in many parts of his epistles) of those who thought to "continue in sin that grace might abound." Then again, in this same epistle, a little further on, he guards against the more common error of those who, though aware that a life of Christian

virtue is required, yet flatter themselves that if they do but embrace a right faith, Christian virtue will come of itself, without any care or pains on their part to form and keep up moral habits. After having set forth that it is not by works of righteousness which we have done, but by God's mercy that he has saved us, he adds, "These things I will that thou affirm constantly, [earnestly insist on] in order that they who have believed in God may be careful to maintain good works." Such is the outline which Paul gives of Christian faith and Christian duty. But it may be inquired in what sense we are to understand what is said of salvation brought to *all* men, since he could not mean literally every individual of the human race; and, indeed, a like question might be asked respecting the passage as it stands in our version, since it is not literally true that the saving grace of the Gospel has appeared to all mankind. There are (under a course of Providence that is beyond our understanding) many millions of our fellow-creatures who have never heard of the Gospel. But when our Lord himself charged his disciples to go into all the world, and "preach the Gospel to every creature," he could not have meant, nor could they have understood him to mean, that they were actually to come in contact with every individual human being, but merely that they were to preach to all whom they should meet with. And so also Paul, in the passage before us, doubtless meant that the Gospel salvation was offered to men of all *classes* and descriptions,

without distinction of Jew or Gentile, high or low, freeman or slave. This was particularly needful to be set forth at the time when he wrote, and is accordingly very frequently and very earnestly dwelt on by him : for the Jews were wedded to the belief that their nation was destined to be exclusively God's peculiar people ; and they looked down with contempt on the Gentiles, as for ever debarred from equal privileges : when not only the Jews, but some Christians also, are apt to undervalue the benefits they themselves enjoy, unless these are exclusively theirs, and others are debarred from them. Accordingly the admission of the Gentiles into the Christian Church was at first a matter of wonder, even to the apostles themselves. We find Peter, when in the house of Cornelius, exclaiming with evident surprise, "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted of him." And we read that the other Jews who had accompanied Peter were astonished when they saw miraculous gifts bestowed on Gentiles. Then, again, among the ancient heathens, the philosophers never thought of instructing the great masses of the people, but only the higher orders ; and as for slaves, no one regarded them as worthy of any attention. To correct such narrow views as these, we find Paul continually inculcating the equality of all classes of persons in God's sight. "There is," says he, "neither male nor female, neither Jew nor Greek,

Barbarian, Scythian, bond or free." And the same doctrine is set forth in many other places. The meaning, then, of the declaration that God's grace has brought salvation to *all* men plainly is, to all descriptions of men; that of those to whom Christ was made known, it was not one portion, to the exclusion of the rest, but to all, that the benefit was offered. None were to be excluded from the Gospel covenant by race, or country, or station in life. And it may be added that none were to be shut out from the benefit by a Divine decree against their partaking of it. This might be proved, even if other proofs were wanting, by the very word "*Gospel*." Some, who profess to know the Gospel better than many others do, seem to have forgotten the meaning of the word. In ancient English, "*Gospel*" (*i.e.* "good-spell") signified "good tidings," "joyful intelligence;" and it is the exact translation of the word in the original, from which our words "evangelist" and "evangelical" are derived. Now, it is plain that nothing can be any *Gospel* (*i.e.* good tidings) to any persons who are not allowed to derive any advantage from it. And our Lord's commission to his apostles to "preach the Gospel to every creature" would have been absurd and self-contradictory, if he had himself determined to exclude some of them from all its benefit. If they excluded themselves, by perversely refusing to accept the benefit, still the offer of it might be called good tidings, since it rested with themselves to embrace

that offer; but not so if they were prevented from doing so by a Divine decree. This may be illustrated by the history of the Israelites of old. They were delivered out of Egypt by the Lord, who promised to bring them into a good land, which they should possess as their own. All this was certainly a gospel (*i.e.* joyful intelligence) to them, though the greater part of them perished in the wilderness through their own refusal to enter into that good land when summoned to take possession of it. The Lord performed his part, but they cut themselves off from his bounty by their own perversity. Or again, suppose there were a number of captives, chained up in a dismal dungeon, and famishing for want of food. If any one should come to announce to them that he was bringing relief—a plentiful supply of food, and freedom from their confinement—this would be considered as good tidings; and that not the less, even though some of them should be so stupidly perverse as to refuse to partake of the food offered them, and to prefer their prison to liberty. But if the messenger who came to them with this announcement should open the prison doors indeed, yet leave the captives chained to their cells, and should set food before them, but out of their reach, this would be a refinement of cruelty. To call the announcement “good tidings” would be a barbarous mockery of the men’s misery.

And no less would it have been a cruel mockery to speak of preaching the Gospel, *i.e.* proclaiming glad

tidings—to persons excluded by a Divine decree from all share of the Divine favour. If such a representation of Christianity were correct, that religion would manifestly be no *Gospel*. But we may be well assured that the Lord Jesus best understood the character of his own religion; and that when he commissioned his disciples to preach the Gospel, he meant what he said, and said what was true. Listen not, therefore, to any who would bewilder you with abstruse metaphysical disquisitions on fate and free-will, and with presumptuous speculations concerning the secret counsels of the Most High; but take your stand on the very word "*Gospel*," which we find in Scripture, and which sufficiently speaks for itself.

It is easy for any one of even moderate ingenuity to pick out, from this place and that, texts of Scripture, which, taken each by itself, and disjoined from the context, may be so interpreted as to be at variance with the general tenor of Scripture, or even with the obvious meaning of those very texts themselves; and thus he may perplex or mislead both others and himself in his endeavour to support some favourite theory. To take as a specimen an instance, one of many; the Apostle Paul introduces the illustration of the clay in the hands of a potter, who, he says, hath power of the same lump to make one vessel to honour and another to dishonour; that is, the potter makes some to a nobler and some to meaner uses. But we should remember that a potter never makes any vessel for the express purpose of being broken

and destroyed. The prophet, to whom the apostle was plainly referring, had been called to contemplate the work of a potter; and the vessel which the potter was forming "was marred in his hand," and he moulded the clay afresh. But we are not told that the workman himself *designedly* marred it, and that he made the vessel on purpose to be spoiled and thrown away—which is what no potter ever does. Yet this image is brought forward by persons who maintain that some to whom the Gospel is preached are by a Divine decree shut out from the benefit of it, and doomed to destruction; which is exactly the opposite of what the illustration itself, as far as it goes, does teach.

Having now considered the several points of instruction contained in the passage before us, it will be worth while to bestow a few moments' attention on what is *omitted* in it—on what the *apostle* does *not* say. For, there is often as great a difference between the wise and the unwise in what they suppress as in what they utter; and the silence of a judicious man may sometimes convey much instruction. In the first place, then, you will observe that the apostle does not explain *why* the saving grace of the Gospel was not made known to the vast multitudes both *before* his time, and *in* his time, and down to the present day, to whom the true God has never been preached.

If the cause of this was ever revealed to Paul himself, at any rate he was not commissioned to reveal it

to us. But in fact this wide prevalence of dark ignorance is only a branch of that one great difficulty which no one can solve—the permission of evil. It is a difficulty which revelation does not pretend to clear up, and which human reason, in our present state of existence, is utterly unable to surmount. No one, except in weak and foolish presumption, ever attempts to explain why any evil at all does exist. And whether an evil be a great or a small one, makes no difference as to the difficulty of explaining, since the greatest and the smallest are alike quite beyond the reach of our faculties, and impossibility does not admit of *degrees*; one thing that is impossible cannot be *more* impossible than another. *Some* cause there must *be* for everything; and much that is now unknown to us, and perhaps *could* not be made intelligible to us with our present faculties, may, for aught we know, be hereafter intelligible and known. Meanwhile revelation teaches us what is of the most practical importance for us to know;—how to *escape* the greatest evils for ourselves, and how to prevent, or remove, or mitigate many of the evils to which our fellow-creatures are exposed. We are sufficiently taught that we ought to be thankful for the blessings we ourselves enjoy, and to be ready to relieve others when suffering. We know not, for instance, what is the cause that so many of our fellow-countrymen in England are at this time suffering under a severe calamity, brought on by the misconduct of another nation, but we know that it is our part to come for-

ward to their relief. But if we inquire, as Peter once did, "Lord, what shall this man do?" we shall often receive, practically, no further answer than "What is that to thee? follow thou Me." But while we are quite unable to explain what really is the cause that any evil at all does exist, it is a great consideration to be assured, as we are, what is *not* the cause. That it is not from malevolence on God's part, or from indifference towards his creatures, or from wanton caprice, we are assured by the sufferings of his "beloved Son in whom he was well pleased." If any one presumes to say that the Most High dooms any of his creatures to misery *for no cause* whatever, except that such is his will, and for the assertion of his sovereignty and the advancement of his own glory,—if any one presumes (as some have actually done) to maintain this, you may answer that even the most hard-hearted and capricious tyrant would never wantonly devote to suffering one whom he himself dearly loved; and that consequently the sufferings of our Blessed Lord plainly prove that *some* cause, unknown to us, does exist which renders suffering necessary, and that this cause cannot be God's ill-will or indifference. Partly, no doubt, for the purpose of supplying us with this proof, and with this consolation, it is that we have had made known to us the sufferings of the beloved Son. And Paul accordingly refers to our knowledge of this as a comforting assurance to us of the Divine benevolence: "He that spared not," says the apostle, "his own

Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him freely give us all things." And this leads me to remark, in the second place, that often and earnestly as Paul dwells on the *fact* that Jesus Christ "gave himself for us," to suffer and die as a sacrifice for man's sake, he does not, either in the epistle now before us, or anywhere else, attempt to explain *why* that sacrifice was necessary, or in *what way* it operated for our salvation. We have no reason to suppose that any explanation of this mystery was ever given to Paul himself; but at any rate, he was not commissioned to give any explanation of it to us.

Those rash and presumptuous speculators who set themselves up to go beyond the sacred writers, have done great damage to the cause of religion. For, it is in the nature of man that one error almost always drives people into another and opposite error. And thus, in the present case, it has often happened, and especially in our own time, that daring and groundless attempts to be explaining mysteries which Scripture has left unexplained, have led some persons, equally weak and equally presumptuous, to deny or explain away the Scripture doctrines themselves which have been thus unwisely defended. Be assured that such mysteries as I have been speaking of would have been fully and clearly explained in Scripture if this had been possible and needful for us in our present state. But as it is, we should remember that we are but children, and much less than children in the sight of our heavenly Father.

And we know that a good parent does many things for the benefit of his children which they are utterly incapable of understanding till they shall have ceased to be children. And they, if they are dutiful and at all intelligent, are content to be affectionately grateful to him for his kindness, and obedient to his directions, without attempting, by crude and groundless conjectures of their own, to explain things that are beyond their capacity. "Ought not Christ," says our Lord himself to his disciples, "to have suffered such things and to enter into his glory?" And then He proceeds to bring before them the prophecies respecting himself; but not to give any explanation of the Divine counsels. And in like manner, Paul, when before Agrippa, pleads that he taught "none other things than what Moses and the *Prophets* did say should come; that Christ should suffer, and should be the first that should rise from the dead." But neither he nor his great Master speak of any other necessity than the necessity of the fulfilment of prophecies. Why it was that these things were decreed which had been predicted because they had been decreed, they do not inform us. And we shall best show our humble faith by acquiescing in what they determined; in gratefully trusting to what has been done for us, and taught us, without pretending to speculate beyond our knowledge, and beyond our powers.

What I have been saying on this head is equally

applicable to another point also—the Divine nature of the Lord Jesus. In this Epistle (as I have already remarked), and in many other parts of Scripture, Christ's Divinity is asserted or alluded to in the clearest manner; but, though he is as clearly declared to be a man, no explanation is attempted of this most startling mystery—the union of the Divine and human natures in one and the same person. We are distinctly told, that “in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily;” that “He and the Father are one;” and in the passage we have been now considering, that He is our great God and Saviour; and yet, again, that “there is one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus;” and that, moreover, “He was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.” But how all this can be, is nowhere explained in Scripture. And all the attempts that have been made by rash and presumptuous theologians to pry further into this mystery, and to lay down something more distinct and full than what the Scriptures teach us, have only had the effect of raising up doubt and heresies. But after all, the union, in each of ourselves, of the body and soul, is a mystery which we are utterly unable to clear up, though we know the fact. It is very common to confound together familiar *acquaintance* and accurate *knowledge*; and it is thus that we are apt to overlook the mysterious strangeness—beyond what either anatomists or metaphysical philosophers can explain—of the union of two such

different things as the human soul and body, and the dependence of each upon the other. The more you reflect on the subject, the more difficult it will appear to you. And how then could it be possible for us to understand anything of the Divine-human nature of Jesus Christ, except so far as Revelation makes it known to us? It is hinted in Scripture that we shall hereafter be permitted to know more, and that "we shall see Him as he is." But in our present state we should content ourselves with the confidence that if fuller information had been possible for us, and needful for us, we should have received it in the Scriptures.

Lastly, it is important to notice the very brief and general language in which Paul and the other Scripture writers speak of "that blessed hope" which is set before the Christian. They do, indeed, often and distinctly and earnestly set forth the doctrine (which was indeed the chief foundation of their preaching) that a happy and immortal life is secured for Christ's faithful servants, in those heavenly mansions which he has prepared for them. But they enter into no full particulars of the kind of life which the blessed in heaven are to lead. We are only told that they will "ever be with the Lord."

Now contrast this with what we may be certain would have been the description given by impostors or by enthusiasts. A scheming impostor, seeking to win converts to a religion of his own devising, would have been sure to give full and glowing descriptions

of heavenly happiness, suited to the understanding and to the taste of those he addressed. And a deluded enthusiast, mistaking his day-dreams for revelations, would have been likely to dream very largely on a subject so exciting to his imagination and to his feelings. And this is what has actually taken place with some Christian sects, who imagine themselves to have received a fresh revelation, containing a full account of particulars relative to what they call the New Jerusalem. So also the pretended prophet, Mahomet—who was probably a mixture of enthusiast and impostor—gives in his book copious particulars of the delights of the paradise he promised to his followers, quite alluring to their gross and sensual tastes. He dwells on the gardens full of delicious fruits, the rivers of nectar and milk, the rich feasts, and all manner of sensual gratifications which were the most likely to attract such people as he was addressing. And such would probably have been the character of *our* Scriptures if our religion had been a human device. But such a full description of the Christian heaven as would have been at once the most readily understood and the most attractive to man in his present state, would have been *untrue*. And again, one that would have given full particulars truly, would have been, I conceive, partly unintelligible to us, and partly distasteful. And this doubtless is the reason, or at least *one* reason, why all details of particulars have been withheld from us in our Scriptures.

It is in a corresponding manner that we proceed with our young children. A parent of good sense makes his children learn and do many things which he assures them will tend to make them, when they shall be grown up, prosperous and respected and beloved. And they must be satisfied, for the present, with these his general assurances. For if he should attempt to explain to children the occupations and the enjoyments of grown people, he would find that much of what he said was very imperfectly understood, or wholly unintelligible, or *misunderstood*, or that much of the rest was uninteresting or distasteful to the childish mind.

Now this nearly corresponds to our present condition, and our Heavenly Father deals with us accordingly. And hence our Lord himself declares that he who does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, shall not enter therein. Although there is much in God's dispensations that is altogether hidden from us at present, and though a large portion of what *has* been made known is but partially and dimly comprehended, this is no reason why we should not earnestly set ourselves to make the right use of what we do know. Enough has been revealed to us to call for our deep gratitude, to interest us in our duty, to cheer us in the performance of our duty, and to conduct us, with Divine help, on the road to eternal life in our Saviour's presence; and though we are not told why it is that there exists any such thing as evil, we are well assured

that "all things work together for good to them that love God."

I have only to remind you, in conclusion, that among the works which Paul enjoins us to be careful to maintain—the works which are good and profitable to mankind—Christian liberality occupies a prominent place. Give, therefore, on this and on similar occasions, with a liberal hand, and take heed that you give not grudgingly, but gladly, for "God loveth a cheerful giver."

THE CHRISTIAN'S ADMONITION.

1 CORINTHIANS X. 11.

*Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples:
and they are written for our admonition, upon whom
the ends of the world are come.*

THE Apostle Paul has been admonishing the Corinthians in the passage before us to derive instruction and take warning from the example of the Israelites, whose history was written, he said, for their admonition. This accordingly is one of those many passages in the New Testament which go to prove that the Old Testament is not to be neglected by Christians; and it is the more remarkable, inasmuch as the Corinthians were not only Christians, but Gentile Christians—converted not from the religion of Moses, but from heathen idolatry; and yet he not only recommends to them the study of the Jewish Scriptures, but even addresses them as if they were themselves children of Israel, descended from those very persons to whom the law of Moses was delivered, and whom he calls “our fathers.” “Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea,” &c. Meaning by this to signify

that though the Corinthians and other Gentiles were not of the seed of Abraham after the flesh,—were not actually of the same race with the Israelites,—yet that they and all other Christians were, in a spiritual sense, children of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, inasmuch as they were adopted children of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; were engrafted by God on the same stock, and were heirs of the promises made to Abraham; that the Christian Church, in short, was the successor of the Israelites, and should inherit corresponding favours and privileges. With the same view it is that St. Paul says, in his Epistle to the Galatians, “If they be Christ’s then are they Abraham’s seed,” and heirs according to the promise; and that Peter, in an admonition to women, mentioning Abraham, says, “whose *daughters* ye are as long as ye do well.”

It is evident, then, that the Christian Church stands in the place of the Jewish, the law having been succeeded by the Gospel; and that the members, therefore, of the Church of Christ ought to derive instruction as to the nature of the Gospel system by studying and contemplating the Mosaic dispensation.

In the passage before us, Paul is calling the attention of his hearers to this subject, chiefly with a view to stir up their diligence and to warn them of the danger they were in if, presuming on their privileges, they reckoned themselves sure of a continuance of God’s favour, without exerting themselves to make a

right use of their advantages. • It appears from the general tone of this epistle that the Corinthians were somewhat disposed to fall into the fault of excessive confidence and security ; and it is probable they were inclined to misinterpret Paul's expressions when he addresses his converts as "elect," and as objects of God's peculiar favour, as if that he implied that they were sure of salvation, however presuming and incautious their behaviour. Paul does not recall or omit such expressions as these, but only explains their true meaning. In this very epistle he addresses the Corinthians as "them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints;" and again, "God is faithful by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord." But he afterwards warns them that they must not suppose that every one who is thus called and elected is sure of eternal life, if he is not careful and active in taking advantage of his privileges by leading a Christian life ; for he tells them that he himself counts not himself to have apprehended, but that he earnestly *strives* for the prize set before him ; that he runs, that he fights to obtain it ; and that he "keeps under his body, and brings it into subjection, lest that by any means when he has preached to others, he himself should be a castaway." (1 Cor. ix. 27.) Not that he meant to express any distressing doubt as to his own final acceptance, but only that constant vigilant exertions are necessary for him, and warns every one. The words last cited

are from the close of the preceding chapter. You should always carefully keep in mind—what I suppose you are, most of you, aware of—that the divisions into chapters and verses are not the work of the inspired writers, but were added many ages after, for convenience of reference. In this place the break between the ninth and tenth chapters comes in the midst of, and interrupts one portion of, the apostle's discourse.

The tenth chapter begins with "But I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea." All the best MSS., however, have "for" instead of "but," which is also the reading of that very ancient version, the Latin Vulgate, and, I believe, all critics are agreed that this is the right reading. And it carries more clearly the connection which was evidently in the apostle's mind. He had been exhorting them (by referring to the illustration of the Grecian games, which they were familiar with, in which there were contests of wrestling, foot-races, and many other kinds) so to *run* that they might obtain an incorruptible crown. And this, he goes on to say, is what he does himself, and is necessary for all Christians; since, if he or they were to grow negligent and disobedient, they would forfeit the advantage of their high privileges, even as so many of the Israelites did of old. "For," says he, "I would not have you ignorant that all of them were God's chosen people, though yet most

of them were cut off for their rebellion against him." "Wherefore," he concludes, "let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." He tells them to consider that the Israelites of old were also called and set apart, and sanctified to be God's peculiar people, and yet that with many (most) of them God was displeased, and that they were overthrown in the wilderness for their disobedience; and he exhorts the Corinthians to take warning from this example, lest they also should by their negligence lose the benefit of their having been called to the grace (or favour) of God in Christ Jesus. "I would not," says he, "that ye should be ignorant how that *all* our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and were all baptised unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and did all eat of the same spiritual meat, and did all drink the same spiritual drink."

Here then we may observe how strongly Paul insists upon it that it was not *some* of the Israelites who were called or selected to these privileges, and some not; they *all*, he tells us, without exception, alike enjoyed these miraculous deliverances and favours from God. But then, this calling of that nation, and sanctification of them as God's people, which extended to every individual of that nation, did not secure their entrance into the promised land, and a continuance of God's favour; *that* being left to depend on their own behaviour. And hence the apostle takes occasion to admonish the Corinthians

that their case was the same, and that they, although all of them the called, and chosen, sanctified of God, as the Jews had been, must be careful not to fall into their transgressions, lest, like them, they should forfeit their hope. "Wherefore," says he, "let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." This, which is only one out of the many lessons which the history of the Israelites may teach us, I have now reverted to on account of its peculiar importance, and the many mistakes prevailing on the subject, which seem to require that the point should be set in the clearest possible light. This, however, is, as I have said, one out of many things which may be learned from the Old Testament that are needful for the instructions of Christians; and I shall, from time to time, point out some of the most remarkable of them to your notice, taking care, at the same time, to keep steadily in view the caution which I have already more than once mentioned, against confounding the two systems together, and inserting parts of the one into the other. It cannot be too often repeated, that the law of the Gospel—the Mosaic and the Christian dispensation—though closely connected, are quite distinct; though they correspond in almost every point, they coincide or agree scarcely in any. Even the very circumstances in which they most exactly refer to each other, they are rather opposite than alike; in the same manner as the impression of a seal corresponds or answers to the seal itself, the parts which are prominent in the

one being in the other indented; or as the key fits the lock, by having its wards made opposite, and thus answering to those of the lock. If indeed we consider, what is undoubtedly the truth, that the Jewish dispensation was intended as a preparation for the Gospel, it follows of course that it must be unlike it in all its parts, and yet analogous, or answering to it. For if there had not been this analogy or correspondence, it would not have fulfilled the purpose of being a preparation for it; and if, again, there had been more than this correspondence—if there had been a direct coincidence and agreement, it would not have been a *preparation* for the Gospel, but the Gospel itself. In fact, all histories that are written—all events that happen—all persons that exist—serve for the admonition of a sincere and zealous Christian; zealous, I mean, for his own improvement. He can and will make all men and all things contribute towards his eternal welfare; for he can make them all, at least, *teach* him something valuable.

In order to illustrate still more fully this truth, which I conceive to be of the utmost importance, and often very imperfectly understood, I will introduce a comparison which may serve to explain my meaning, and to fix it in the memory of those who feel an interest in the subject. The Mosaic law, then, may be compared to a flower, and the Gospel to its fruits.

In the first place, the flower is, as every one

knows, the necessary preparation for its fruit, and consequently, must be brought to perfection before it; hence, in the next place, the various parts of the flower have a reference to the fruit, and a fitness for producing it; but moreover, the flower and the fruit are very unlike. The parts of the second correspond, but do not agree; the one must wither and fade away before the other can be perfected; and the parts which are most conspicuous and remarkable in each, are in the other subordinate, and of less consequence. And it may be added, that to a skilful and attentive observer of nature, the examination of either a flower or its fruit would be a great help towards understanding the nature of the other. I mean, *e.g.*, that there is in the blossom of some fruits a certain peculiar form, well known to botanists, which indicates infallibly a wholesome fruit; so that a person acquainted with this rule, who should in a foreign country meet with an unknown tree, and be doubtful as to its fruit, might, on inspecting its flower, if he found it to be of that peculiar structure, boldly pronounce the fruit to be not poisonous. And again, there is another form of flower which indicates that the fruit is very likely to be unwholesome. Lastly, it may be observed, that any one who should give a description or a drawing of any plant, in which the parts of the flower and those of the fruit should be mixed together, would be giving a representation totally unlike both the one and the other, and such as had

never actually existed. In all these respects there is a like correspondence between the Mosaic law and the Gospel. In the first place, that law was the preparation for the Gospel; it was, as Paul tells us, our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ. We cannot tell indeed why the Gospel was not revealed—why Jesus Christ did not come into the world many ages earlier—any more than we can tell why God's Providence has appointed that the flower should necessarily appear before the fruit can be produced; but in both cases, the fact is not to be doubted. Next, as the parts of the flower have a reference to the fruit that is to come, so all the ceremonies and ordinances of the law, and most of the circumstances recorded in the history of God's people of old, to whom that law was given, have a signification relating to the Gospel dispensation. And as the flower and the fruit are unlike, so is the law a different system from the Gospel, and must not be confounded with it. The flower must fade away that the fruit may be perfected; even so was the law suspended and brought to an end by the Gospel. Yet this fading away is quite different from the death or *destruction* of the flower, being its natural progress towards the object and purpose for which it was formed by nature. And in like manner, Jesus Christ, as He himself tells, "came not to destroy the law and the prophets, but to fulfil them." That which was *promised* by the prophets was *performed* in the Gospel; it has the *reality* of those good things

of which the law had the *shadow*. The law and the prophets therefore came to an end not by being destroyed, but by being fulfilled,—not by being frustrated and made void, but by the accomplishment of the purposes for which they served as a preparation; as the flower in its natural progress is changed into a fruit. And those things which are the most prominent and conspicuous and remarkable in the Mosaic dispensation, are the least prominent part of the Christian dispensation; while the most important parts of this last are but faintly to be traced, or are merely shadowed out in the other. And even thus, if you examine a flower, you will find what is hereafter to be the fruit is but a small and obscure bud, much less conspicuous than the rest. But again, after a time you will find this small bud swelled out into the perfect fruit, while the other parts of the flower are either withered and shed after having fulfilled their purpose, or else shrunk up, and comparatively insignificant. And lastly, as a skilful botanist, from a careful examination of a flower, may derive some help towards judging of the qualities of its fruit, but would never be guilty of such a blunder as to mistake the one for the other, or confound the two together, so a diligent and judicious student of the sacred Scriptures may, from the examination of the Mosaic law, derive help towards explaining many points in the Gospel, but will carefully avoid the error of confusedly blending the two systems together.

To apply what has been said, as fully as might be done, to the illustrating and explaining of the Old and New Testament; would be to make a commentary on the greater part of the Bible, so much is there that depends on the principle just laid down.

At present I will, in conclusion, point out only and suggest to your notice, as worthy of your attentive study, a few of the principal points in which the Jewish law and the Jewish history correspond with, signify, and foreshow some of the most important circumstances in the Gospel dispensation.

The Church or congregation of Israel (or Jewish Church, so called from the tribe of Judah being the principal of the tribes of Israel) answers to the Christian Church, and they are thence called by Paul "our fathers," as being our *predecessors* in the honour and privilege of being God's favoured people. The cloud or cloudy pillar which St. Paul alludes to, under the protection and guidance of which they passed out of Egypt through the sea and through the wilderness, and which gave them light by night, signified the guiding and protecting and enlightening influence of God's Holy Scriptures. The passage through the Red Sea is a type, as Paul expressly tells us, of our baptism; and as the baptism of Christians with water is accompanied, according to God's gracious promise under the new covenant, by offer of the gift of the Holy Spirit to those who ask it, so Paul joins together the sea and the cloud, as together forming

a type of baptism. "They were all," he says, "baptised unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea." The wilderness into which they passed, and in which trial was to be made of their obedience to God's laws, is figurative of this world, which is appointed for the trial of Christians; and the promised land to which they were journeying (and which so many of them failed of reaching through disobedience) is a type of the immortal life to which Christians are required to bend their course.

The spiritual meat and drink as St. Paul calls them, that is, the miraculous supply of manna from heaven, and of water from the rock, are figurative, as the apostle tells us, of Christ, who proclaimed, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and whosoever shall drink of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst; but it shall be in him a well of water springing up unto eternal life;" who also called himself the "bread of life that came down from heaven;" who declared that "every one who would inherit eternal life must eat his flesh and drink his blood," signifying thereby his dwelling in the hearts of those who have an entire faith in him, and earnest love towards him, and who zealously keep his commandments; and who himself appointed bread and wine to be received as symbols or signs of his flesh and blood, and as the means whereby we are to receive the benefit of his redemption. "The cup of blessing which we bless," says Paul in the sixteenth verse of the same chapter, "is it not the communion

of the blood of Christ?" the bread which we break, "is it not the communion of the body of Christ?"

Again, the law delivered from Mount Sinai, and the covenant there made with the Israelites—of which the terms were, that they should worship the Lord their God, and serve him faithfully, and that he should bring them into a good land and give them victory and worldly prosperity—signified the new covenant of grace; the offer, that is, of God's Holy Spirit to all Christians who seek earnestly for it, and the promise of eternal life to all who are led by the Spirit; and accordingly it was on the day of Pentecost, the anniversary of this delivery of the law from Mount Sinai, that the extraordinary and miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost were first poured out on the apostles. Joshua (who is called Jesus in the New Testament, according to the Greek way of writing the name, Joshua and Jesus being the same name), who was the captain to lead the Israelites into the promised land, and to overcome their enemies, was a type of the second Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who hath overcome death and purchased eternal salvation for his faithful followers. And the name was given to each for the same reason; for he who was originally named Hosea, had his name changed, as we are told by Moses, to Joshua, which signifies Jchovah, the Saviour; and in like manner the angel tells the Blessed Virgin Mary, "Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins." The high priests, under the Jewish law, were figura-

tive (as well as the sacrifices they offered) of the one great High Priest who was to come, who, as Paul says, offered himself without spot to God, and ever liveth to make intercession for us.

And the "true tabernacle,"—the real sanctuary, or holy of holies,—that heaven to which He ascended, was shadowed out by the holy of holies in the visible earthly tabernacle into which the high priest alone went once a year to make an atoning sacrifice. "We have," says the same apostle, "an High Priest who is set on the right hand of the majesty in the heavens; a minister of the sanctuary of the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not man."

Lastly, the ingratitude and obstinacy and disobedience of the Israelites, and the destruction which they thus brought on themselves, are but too true a picture of the like behaviour in many Christians who grieve the Holy Son of God, who err in their hearts, and will not know his ways, and who therefore must not expect to enter into his rest. Some of them were for going back into Egypt, preferring that hard and degrading bondage to the service of their God; but this was not allowed them; they had placed before them the peculiar blessing or the peculiarly heavy judgments of God, and they were compelled to take their choice.

These men answer to those who are for going back to the religion of nature, the original and unregenerate state of man, and who would fain avoid the duties and the conditions and the penalties of the Christian

covenant, and are ready to forego its promises. But this is not permitted ; having been once called to the Christian privileges, we must either make the right use of them, and lay hold on eternal life, or incur a far heavier penalty than if we had been left in the state of ignorant and benighted heathens ; “ for this,” says our Lord himself, “ is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness better than light, because their deeds were evil.”

Again, there were some of the Israelites who worshipped false gods, after the example of their idolatrous neighbours, or images made with their own hands ; and are not these Christians who are more devoted to the gains, the pleasures, the ambitious schemes, or the frivolous amusements of this world, than to the service of the Redeemer ? Are there not many who are seduced, as the Israelites were by the Midianites, to follow unlawful pleasures and to forget God ? And what matters it, if men worship gold when it be shaped into a molten image or not ? There were some too who loathed the bread from heaven which God had sent them ; and there were others who would needs pretend to gather it or to keep it in a different manner from that which he had appointed. And there are but too many now who loathe that living bread which came down from heaven, and disdain to seek salvation through the merit and sacrifice of Christ ; and but too many others, who expect to obtain those benefits in their own way without fulfilling the conditions and observ-

ing the ordinances which he has himself appointed ; who profess to trust in him for salvation, while they steadily disobey his plain and positive injunction, to keep the feast upon his sacrifice, to celebrate the Holy Communion of his body and blood according to his institution. And yet men generally pay some regard to the earnest desire of a friend, even when they expect no advantage to themselves from complying with his wishes ; nay, even though the thing required be in itself apparently trifling and needless ; much more if it be the desire of a dying friend,—the last injunction he leaves with them ; but if it were for them that friend died, to do them such benefits as they could not possibly repay, what sacrilege would they deem it to neglect even the least of his dying commands ? and what madness also, if the fulfilling of that command were also the means for obtaining those benefits ! Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of the world, is probably the only friend that ever was so treated. He certainly is the only one that *can* be treated with *equal* ingratitude, because the utmost benefits we can receive from any other are comparative trifles. What ground of hope those have, who in this, or in any other point, obstinately disobey his commands, or carelessly neglect to take advantage of their high privileges as Christians, they may learn from the example of the Israelites in the wilderness, who tempted God, and proved him, and saw his works forty years. For “all these things happened unto them for ensamples : and they are written for our

admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come ;" *i.e.*, for the admonition of us Christians who live under the Gospel—the last dispensation that God will ever grant to the world. Whether each one of us is to look for his own picture in the rebellious Israelites who were overthrown in the wilderness, or in Caleb and Joshua, who amidst that evil generation were found faithful, and entered the promised land, each one must determine for himself ; and as it is left not only to his own judgment, but to his own choice, to decide which it shall be, let no one, I entreat you, lose one moment in considering what his present case is, and what he expects, and what he wishes his final doom to be. " Wherefore," as St. Paul says, " to-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, but exhort one another daily while it is called to-day, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin."

THE OMISSIONS OF SCRIPTURE.

ROMANS viii. 32.

He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things.

THIS argument, drawn from the consideration of what God has already done for us—that he has, as the Lord Jesus had long before declared, “so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son,” is urged by the apostle as a proof of his loving-kindness and care, and a reason for trusting to him throughout. Thus much is revealed to us for our comfort and encouragement. It is important, however, to consider not only what it is that Paul and the other sacred writers do teach, but also what they do *not* teach. For to overlook anything that Scripture does reveal to us, is not at all a greater or a more hurtful error than to imagine something revealed which is not, and to accept as on Divine authority what is in reality mere human conjecture.

(1.) First, then, we should observe and keep in mind that Scripture does not explain to us the *existence of evil*. Many evils are alluded to in Scripture, and remedies and modes of escape are pointed out to us. And after all, a sick man is more indebted

to the physician who points out to him a *remedy* for his disorder, than to one who gives him a scientific description of the cause of it. But *why* it is that any such thing as evil should be permitted to exist—this great difficulty which has perplexed successive generations of philosophers and divines—the sacred writers do not teach us, and human reason, in our present state, is quite unable to explain. All the attempts that have been made from time to time by rash speculators, have proved nothing but the weakness and presumption of the authors, besides having, in some instances, brought most undeserved censure upon the Scriptures themselves, which have been represented as undertaking and failing to teach what, in truth, they never do undertake at all.’

(2.) In the next place, it is important to remember that the Scriptures do not inform us *why* the sufferings and death of the Christ were necessary for man’s salvation, and *how* his sacrifice operates to effect this. Some bold speculators do undertake to explain all this. And it seems not to have occurred to them or to their admirers that those men are in reality setting up themselves as knowing more than the evangelists and apostles, or at least more than these were commissioned to reveal to mankind.

The help which our religion or any other good cause can receive from the ablest adversaries, is very small, compared with what it may suffer from unwise advocates. It is the wisest and safest course, therefore—as well as the most truly modest and humble—to

confine ourselves in these matters to the express declarations of the sacred writers themselves. I would warn you, my Christian friends, against listening to any one who ventures to go beyond these ; who presents you with *developments* (as they are sometimes called) that are to fill up the omissions of Scripture. An humble, unlearned Christian, of ordinary common sense, may understand that he is guilty of no annoyance in rejecting any such teacher, however learned or ingenious, and that he is bound so to do. None more learned or more ingenious are you likely to meet with than the illustrious Bishop Butler, who thus expresses himself on this subject :—

“Some have endeavoured to explain the efficacy of what Christ has done and suffered for us, beyond what Scripture has authorised ; others, probably because they could *not* explain it, have been for *taking it away*, and confining his office of Redeemer of the world to his instruction, example, and government of the Church ; whereas the doctrine of the Gospel appears to be, not only that he *taught* the efficacy of repentance, but *rendered* it of the efficacy it is, by what he did and suffered for us ; and it is our wisdom thankfully to accept the benefit by performing the conditions on which it is offered, on *our* part, without disputing how it was procured on his.” Such is the sober statement of that great theologian in his “*Analogy*.” He guards us against falling into the sin and folly of our first parents, who, when freely permitted to eat of the *tree of life*, turned aside to the tree of

forbidden knowledge. He was one who aimed at knowing *no less*, and was content to know *no more*, of Divine mysteries, inscrutable to man's reason, than the inspired writers tell us. And he shunned the error of those presumptuous speculators who, when the illuminations from heaven—rays of Revelation—fail to shed such full light as they wish for in the Gospel dispensation, are for bringing to the dial-plate the lamp of human philosophy, which throws the shadow whichever way they will. And it is important that we should clearly perceive how much *allied* are the two opposite errors alluded to by Butler; it is a similar want of humble faith that leads the one party to reject what they find it impossible to explain, and the other to find an explanation of whatever they admit.

The latter, even if their explanations were really as satisfactory as *they* perhaps think them, and if they did possess some knowledge beyond that of the apostles—or beyond, at least, what the apostles have imparted to us—yet could not, on that ground, claim the virtue of *faith*. For faith, it is plain, must be measured rather by our ignorance than by our knowledge. Some knowledge, indeed, there must be, as a *foundation* for any reasonable faith to rest on; but the promise of the faith *itself*—distinct from the basis on which it is built—must be that which we do *not* clearly understand. For “faith is the evidence of things *not seen*.” There can be no exercise of faith in assenting to truths that are

plainly demonstrated to our reason, or in obeying commands whose reasonableness is clearly perceived. Faith, as distinguished from blind credulity, is shown in taking the word of another, whom we have good reason to rely on, for something that we do *not* clearly see or fully understand. Any one who, in a dark night at sea, believes on the word of the pilot and the sailors that the haven is near at hand, shows more faith in them than others who fancy that they see the land before them. He may be convinced that those sailors are deceiving themselves, and are gazing on a fog-bank which they mistake for land ; but at any rate they cannot claim superior, or equal faith to his. In order, however, to obtain such full instruction as we ought from the passage of Scripture now before us, it is necessary to keep in mind that our present condition in this world corresponds in a great degree (as we are often reminded in our Scriptures) to that of children. We stand in somewhat a like relation both to our Heavenly Father (though, of course, immeasurably further removed from Him than any child from an earthly parent) and also to what we may become hereafter. "When I was a child," says the Apostle Paul, "I spake as a child, I thought as a child, I understood as a child ; but when I became a man, I put away childish things." "We now see, by means of a mirror, darkly ; but then, face to face : now I know in part ; but then shall I know even as also I am known."

When, then, on the one hand, presumptuous objections are brought against the received accounts of the Fall of Man, for instance, of the Redemption by Jesus Christ, of a future Judgment, and every part of the Divine dispensations ; and when, on the other hand, explanations no less presumptuous of the same are offered,—let him who would derive wisdom from the source which God has pointed out, instead of listening to such objections, or to such answers, occupy himself in reflecting on the absurd mistakes children commit, when they imagine themselves to have a full and correct notion of anything that has been partially explained to them, and allow themselves to fancy (as soon as any glimmering knowledge has been afforded them) that they understand completely the transactions and situations of grown persons. And if you would obtain the best idea man is capable of forming on that most important point—the nature and extent of your own ignorance—seek it by analogy, and have recourse to a child for your instructor. Endeavour to convey to a very young child as full and correct a notion as possible of civil government and legal institutions, of commercial transactions, and of various arts and sciences, of the past history and present condition of various nations, and then carefully observe how utterly *unintelligible* many points will remain to the infant mind, after all the explanations that can be given ; how *uninteresting* many subjects will prove, which hereafter will be regarded as the most important ;

how imperfect and inadequate will be the notions that are formed on others, and what strange mistakes will be perpetually arising, especially if the child, through presumptuous self-conceit, is not aware of his own incompetency to judge, and does not perceive when he is out of his depth. And then, let the instructor apply the lesson to himself. Let him learn, from the example of the child, what is likely to be the imperfection of his own knowledge, and of his own faculties. And let him no longer presume that he understands, or can expect to discover, the whole, or even the greatest and most essential part, of any of the Divine dispensations, merely because *some* part has been declared; nor flatter himself because he is well-assured of the truth of *something*, therefore there is nothing concealed from him. And it may be added that the knowledge which *is* obtainable by children, and by *us*, though partial and imperfect, is of practical *use*, as far as it goes, provided it be rightly applied. A child, for instance, understands very little of the real nature of the sun, less than the little that *we* know of it, but he very soon comes to understand its power of enlightening, of warming, of drying, of changing the colours of several substances, of expanding flowers, and ripening fruits. And a child is not unlikely to conclude, at first, that the sun was created for the sole purpose of giving light and heat to the spot where he lives. He is, at first, ignorant of its conferring the same advantages on distant

parts of the world ; and perhaps he supposes its real magnitude to be nearly the same as it appears to be. By degrees his knowledge is enlarged, and he comes to understand that the sun shines upon the whole earth. He then, perhaps, looks back with contempt on his own former ignorance, and imagines that he understands fully the whole use and importance of the sun ; whereas, he still knows but a very small part of it. In time, he may, perhaps, come to learn that our earth is only one out of many planets that are enlightened by the same sun, which is itself a larger body than all of them together. And it would be presumptuous for us to conclude that even *that* purpose is the only one, or is even the principal one, for which the sun was created. Most arrogant then must that man be, who should dare to conclude, that when he knows something of God's attributes, and of his dispensations, he fully understands the whole, or even the most essential part of them. We know certain relations in which the Most High stands towards us, but there may be other relations besides these, of which we know nothing. We are instructed in some degree how far *we* are interested in the fall of Adam, in the redemption through Christ, and in others of God's dispensations ; but we know not that this is all, or even the greatest part. Those events may, for aught we know, have been of consequence to other orders of beings, of whose very existence we are ignorant. The death of Christ may, in some unknown way,

benefit millions who never heard of him. His coming to judgment may affect other worlds besides our own. Is the thought of this vast extent of ignorance revolting to any one? Let him, then, recollect the time when he was a child, and refresh his memory by observation of other children. Let him remember how strange many things seemed to him which are now perfectly cleared up; how utterly ignorant he was of matters which are now quite familiar to him; how far he was from being able to comprehend the nature, or even to suspect the existence, of many things which now principally occupy his thoughts. How unaccountable seemed some of the proceedings of his parents, and how unreasonable were some of their commands; and above all, how sure he was to fall into mistakes whenever he presumed to fancy that his own notions were adequate and his knowledge complete. This habitual study of the infantile mind will prepare us to go any lengths in the consciousness of our ignorance and the due distrust of our faculties. We shall thus become learned in human nature, as to that most important part of it, its imperfections; and where full and accurate knowledge is not to be obtained, we shall at least keep clear of presumptuous error. When the darkness cannot be removed, it is a great point to be aware that it *is* darkness, and not to be misled by false lights, and deceived by delusive appearances.

But are we then, it may be asked, to teach that

there is virtue in implicit and uninquiring faith? Is it groundless credulity and contented ignorance that we are to learn from children? Ask an intelligent child of intelligent parents whether they expect him to remain contented in universal ignorance; to believe implicitly whatever any one tells him, whether on good authority or not; to abstain from all inquiry; to repress all curiosity, and to use no endeavours for improving in knowledge, and attaining truth? He will tell you that, on the contrary, they commend him for being properly inquiring and eager to learn; that they tell him to take nothing on trust that he is capable of sifting thoroughly and proving satisfactorily; and that they warn him against being over-credulous, and hasty in admitting without proof what he hears from persons undeserving of credit. Yet they caution him against an indiscriminate and presumptuous curiosity; they assure him that there are some points of knowledge unsuitable to his age, and many that are beyond the reach of his present faculties, which it would be unprofitable, or even hurtful, for him to pry into unseasonably; that he must wait with patience, till his reason is matured, since there is enough, and more than enough, of what is needful for him to learn, to occupy all his attention in the mean time; and they tell him that even of what he has to learn at present, there are some parts which he cannot, as yet, fully comprehend, and which, therefore, he must be content to take on trust, on the authority of

his instructors, in whose veracity and judgment he has good reason to confide.

This is the system of the most judicious teachers of youth, and there is in it nothing of inconsistency. For it is possible at once to encourage profitable curiosity, and repress that which is impertinent,—to check indiscriminate credulity, yet to require full faith (on sufficient authority) in matters beyond the reach of the learner's faculties, and to encourage inquiry about such as are not beyond his reach. Now if this be the wisest and best way of training children, we cannot doubt, nor wonder, nor complain, that our great Master—our Father “who is in heaven”—has adopted a like method towards us in our present state of childhood here on earth. And (to use the words of one of the most sanctified of our religious poets),

“What if much be still unknown,
The Lord shall teach thee that,
When thou shalt stand before His throne,
Or sit as Mary sat.

“Wait till He shall Himself declare
Things now beyond thy reach;
But listen not, my child, to those
Who the Lord's secrets teach;

“Who teach thee more than He has taught,
Tell more than He revealed;
Preach tidings which He never brought,
And read what He left sealed.”

That faith, then, “without which it is impossible to please God,” does not consist in assenting

to anything *without* sufficient evidence, but in a disposition candidly and fairly to weigh the evidence, in a due distrust of the human faculties, and in readiness to admit whatever shall appear to be clearly taught by our Divine Instructor, even though it be what we should never have expected, nor can clearly comprehend. Such is the docility which we require of children, and which we commend in them; and such is the *docility* which we must ourselves show if we would obtain the approbation of our Heavenly Father. And the same sort of resigned and trustful submission to the will of a wise and kind parent, which we think reasonable in a dutiful and affectionate child, this it becomes us to pay to the Most High. Now an amiable and intelligent child never reasons thus:—"My father's plans are inscrutable to me; and therefore I cannot tell whether the steps he may next take will be for my benefit or for my hurt. Since I cannot understand his reasons for occasionally subjecting me to pain and privation, I cannot be sure whether he may not hereafter, for some reasons unintelligible to me, devote me undeservedly to destruction; and therefore I have no ground for trusting to his kindness." Such, I say, are *not* the thoughts that occur to a well-disposed child, who, notwithstanding his inability to explain to himself, in all cases, the reasons of his being sometimes exposed to pain or inconvenience, feels nevertheless an undoubting and reasonable confidence that his parents love him and seek his benefit, and understand better than

he does how to promote it. Such a child will be ready to say, "My father bids me do so-and-so, and his will is reason enough for *me*. Doubtless there are good reasons, though unknown to me, for his command; and these he may perhaps explain to me hereafter; but in the mean time it is my duty to obey."

And such a child would never presume to pronounce that his father *had* no reason at all for his command except that such was his pleasure. This would evidently be to attribute to him *caprice*. On the contrary, he doubts not that there *is* good reason, both for giving the command, and for withholding the explanation of it. That such is the father's will would be no good reason to the father for *giving* the command, though it is a sufficient reason to the child for *obeying* it. For the child, therefore, to insist on it that his father *had* no reason except his will for what he does, because he has not thought fit to make the reason known, would not be dutiful humility, but the height of rash presumption. So also an earthly king, who is not responsible to any of his subjects for the commands he gives, may sometimes see fit to issue commands without stating his reasons, and it would be insolent rashness for any one to conclude that he had *no* reasons at all, but acted from mere tyrannical caprice. And we also, if we would imitate the example of dutiful children or loyal subjects, are bound to trust that our heavenly Father and King had good reasons, even when not revealed

to us, for all his dealings with mankind. We indeed are exhorted—and very rightly—to “do all for the glory of God ;” this is because it is of advantage to *men* that our Heavenly Father should be glorified. But to attribute this as a motive of *Him*, and to suppose that he can covet glory for his *own* sake, is an idea most absurd and most degrading. Yet there have not been wanting persons in high repute as great theologians, who have dared to assert most distinctly that the Most High inflicts evil on multitudes of his creatures *for no cause whatever*, except that such is *his will*, and to “set forth his sovereignty” and “promote his own glory ;” as if he could literally derive glory!—thus, in fact, attributing to him *caprice* (though without using that very word itself), and expressly acknowledging that the decree which they represent him as making is a horrible one! I have been citing the very language of some celebrated writers who were professed disciples of Him who said, “Be ye merciful, even as your Father who is in heaven is merciful ;” fellow-disciples with the apostle who declared that God “willeth not that any should perish.”

But how, then—these writers say—can you explain the state of ignorance, and sinfulness, and wretchedness in which vast numbers are permitted to remain? And there are those who take upon them to guess the motives which influence the mind of the Most High? A truly humble Christian will answer that he *cannot* explain it at all, any more than a child can

many of the proceedings of grown-up people. But that is no reason why he should accept as an explanation what does not really explain anything at all, but only goes to remove one great difficulty by raising up another, much greater, in its place. To the question, "Lord, and what shall this man do?" the answer of Scripture often is, "What is that to thee? follow thou me." Why, and how, it was necessary that innocent blood should be shed for man's redemption, we know no more than Abraham did why he was commanded to offer up his son. And when the Apostle Peter allowed himself to judge concerning God's counsels according to his own notions of what was probable to his own natural sentiments—surrendering himself to what some call the "dictates of the heart,"—he incurred a rebuke for saying, "Be it far from thee, Lord; there shall no such thing happen unto thee!"

If you are asked how you know that the sacrifice of Christ was necessary, you should answer, because the Scriptures inform us that it did *take place*. It must therefore have been necessary, under the *actual* circumstances. But we have no right to frame any metaphysical theories to prove that this necessity would have existed under any other, quite different, or even opposite circumstances. The actual state of things was, we know, that the greater part of the Jewish nation refused to receive Jesus as the Christ—it being plainly the Divine decree that they should not be compelled, by external force, to receive Him

against their will; and they thereupon condemned Him to death.

We have no right to maintain that his death *would* have been necessary under the opposite supposition of a universal acceptance of Him. On the contrary, we are expressly told by the sacred writers, "I wot that *through ignorance* ye did it, as did also your [rulers]." (Acts iii.) "*Because they knew him not*, nor yet the voices of the prophets, they have fulfilled them in condemning him." And again, "For if the princes of this world had known" the wisdom of God, "they would *not* have crucified the Lord of Glory." (1 Cor. ii.) But the present is one of the cases in which, though unable to explain, and not venturing to ask, why it was necessary that such and such an event should *take place* at all, it is allowable and profitable to inquire why it was *made known to us*. These are two totally distinct inquiries, though the thoughtless often confound them together. It is as often hopeless and presumptuous to seek for the cause why so-and-so did *occur*, when yet it may be right to seek, and easy to find, why, having occurred, it was *revealed* to man.

If, therefore, any one of good sense, and truly humble piety, were asked why the sufferings and death of Christ were necessary, he would answer that he cannot tell. But if asked why this fact was *made known* to us in Scripture, he would answer, under the guidance of the apostle, that it was to give us confidence in God's loving-kindness and care

for us. "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things." If asked to account for the existence of any evil at all in the universe, he would answer that that is a question beyond man's natural powers, and on which the Scriptures give us no revelation; but he would add, that though they do *not* tell us what is the cause of evil, they do teach us—which is no small matter—what is *not* the cause; that it cannot be from ill-will, or indifference, or caprice on the part of the Most High, as is proved by the sufferings undergone by the *beloved* One, "in whom He was well pleased." If asked how he can be sure that the representation is untrue which I have just now alluded to, that God inflicts evil for no cause whatever, but that such is his will, and that it is for the sake of his glory, and the assertion of his sovereignty—if asked this—he would reply that this is fully disproved by the Son of God having been himself "made perfect through suffering." For no conceivable being—not even a tyrant—would ever, wantonly and through mere caprice, inflict sufferings on the object of his own strong love. Though we know, therefore, that from some cause unknown to us, evil does exist, we are assured that that cause *cannot* be a deficiency of goodness in the Most High.

We are thus enabled to learn, if we will humbly consult Scripture, not indeed what is the origin of evil, or the cause of Christ's suffering, but what is *not* the

cause of evil, and why the suffering of Christ was *made known* to us. But the doctrine we have been considering is—as I have already remarked—the death of Christ, not merely as a martyr in the cause of truth, but as an atoning sacrifice for the redemption of mankind. And as this is what was, in point of fact, utterly unexpected, and which no one of good sense would ever attempt to explain and account for, so there was the more need that it should be very fully and strongly declared in Scripture. For the more strange and paradoxical any doctrine is, which we are nevertheless required to receive on the authority of Scripture, the more we may expect distinct and frequently-repeated Scripture statements of such doctrine. And this, accordingly, is what we do find, with respect to the doctrine of the Atonement. The assertions of it, and allusions to it, are so numerous and clear, that those who are resolved (as some do resolve) to explain all these away, and, cost what it may, to reject the doctrine, find no small difficulty in the task they undertake. But even if most or all of those assertions and allusions could be got rid of, there would still remain what appears to me a still stronger argument than all of them together in the institution of the Eucharist. The solemn appointment of that ordinance was of itself sufficient to establish the *sacrificial* character of Christ's death, and to impress the doctrine strongly on men's minds, considering who and what the persons were among whom the Gospel was first introduced. They were

persons—both the Jews and the Pagans—who had always from their infancy been familiar with the idea of *sacrifices* as a part of religious worship, and of the worshippers holding a feast on the sacrifice, partaking of the victim. To such persons the partaking of the bread and wine—which were appointed as symbols of the flesh and blood of *Him* their Master, whose life they were told was “given for the world”—could not fail to suggest the belief of his death being a sacrifice. And had there been any error in this their belief, we cannot doubt that it would have been immediately and carefully corrected; instead of being—as we find it was—confirmed and assiduously inculcated. Had Jesus been merely a martyr—the greatest of all martyrs—to the cause of divine truth, it would indeed have been very natural that his death should have been in some way solemnly commemorated by the Church, and perhaps by some symbolical representation of the death itself; but not, surely, by the *eating and drinking* of the symbols of his body and blood. Not only is the bread *broken* and the wine *poured out* (which sufficiently represent the wounding of his body and the shedding of his blood), but both are partaken of by those who celebrate the rite. And this would be an unmeaning and absurd kind of ceremonial in celebrating a mere martyrdom, such as that of Stephen, for instance, or any other martyr, however eminent.

Even if we had not, therefore, such numerous allusions as we do find in Scripture to “Christ our

"*Passover*," sacrificed for us, and "entering into the most holy place with his own blood," as both the sacrificing priest and the slain victim; if there were fewer than there are of such statements and allusions, or if we could bring ourselves to think these were all to be explained away as figures of speech, still the sacrament of the Lord's Supper—early and generally established as we know it was—would be alone a decisive proof that the early Christians must have understood from that ordinance itself that our Lord's death was not a mere martyrdom, but a true sacrifice, similar to, though far surpassing, the expiating sacrifices which they had been familiar with under the law, and which the sacred writers so often refer to as types of the offering of Christ. And as this doctrine—a doctrine so strange and, by human reason, inexplicable—was designed not only to be received, but strongly impressed on the Christian's mind, and habitually present to it, so it seemed good to Divine wisdom that we should not be left to search out passages of Scripture, and on the strength of these lay down the doctrine as a well-established article of our creed, to be merely assented to, once for all, and thenceforward perhaps little thought of; but that we should moreover be continually reminded of it by the often-repeated celebration of a rite which clearly implies the doctrine, and vividly brings it before the thoughts.

You then, my Christian friends, who are habitual attendants at the Lord's table, I would remind to be

duly grateful, among other mercies, for the assurance afforded you of the goodness of Him "who spared not his own Son," but "delivered him for us all," and for the care which he has manifested thus to impress this on your mind. And any who may have hitherto been guilty of neglecting that holy ordinance, I would exhort to persist in that sin no longer, but to attend at the Lord's table with humble penitence for your past omissions, and with full trust in the mercy of Him who has given you such an assurance of his loving-kindness. And all of you I would exhort to listen to none who would presume to explain those counsels of the Most High which he has not thought fit to reveal, or who would dare to assert that He inflicts any sufferings on his creatures for no reason at all except to declare his own sovereignty. And I would exhort you to *bear* patiently, to *wait* patiently, to *run* patiently, and to *hope* patiently. *Bear with patience* any afflictions that may be sent on you by Him to whose goodness you have so much reason to trust. *Wait with patience* for that fuller knowledge which will be afforded us when this our state of childhood here on earth shall have come to an end. *Run with patience* the race that is now set before you, as dutiful and obedient children of your Heavenly Father. And *hope with patience* for your admission to his more immediate presence, when you shall be permitted to "see him as he is."

ON GOOD WORKS.

HEBREWS vi. 10.

God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have showed towards his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.

THE first observation I would make on this passage is in reference to the word "saints." The apostle used this term to denote not some persons of pre-eminent holiness beyond what is expected of the generality, but exactly what *we* mean by the word Christians; persons who had been baptised into the faith of Jesus Christ. The name of Christians they never, you may observe, applied to each other. It was a name introduced by the Romans to denote a body of men whom they could no longer call Jews, since both Jews and Gentiles belonged to it. And they named them from what they supposed to be the proper name of their leader, Christ.

But the sacred writers never applied the name to the members of the Christian Church; doubtless to keep clear of the charge brought against them of teaching a *new* religion at variance with the old dispensation, when in truth they taught (as Paul)

none other things than those which Moses and the prophets did say should come.

There are some portions of Holy Scripture (as most of you must be well aware) which may be so interpreted as to be at variance with each other. And you should listen with distrust to any one who so does interpret some expressions of the sacred writers as to contradict or nullify what they say elsewhere, or who dwells exclusively on certain passages and keeps others out of sight. For the right way of interpreting Scripture is by Scripture itself. Whoever so expounds, *e.g.*, the Apostle Paul, so as to be at variance with James; or again, either of them so as to be at variance with himself—he, you may be certain, must be erroneous in his interpretation. And when you bring together such passages of Scripture as might be understood as opposed to each other, and explain the one by the other, so as to reconcile them together, this is a fair presumption that you have attained the true sense of both. An instance of what I have been saying is now before us.

I would next call your attention to the declaration of the apostle that “God is not unrighteous [unjust] to forget our labour of love in ministering to the saints.” This declaration might be by those who are (as Peter calls them) “unlearned or unstable,” wrested to their own destruction, by interpreting it to mean (in opposition to many plain declarations of the apostles) that our good works have a natural claim of merit

in God's sight. You know how earnestly the sacred writers, Paul in particular, dwell on the doctrine of justification through faith in Christ Jesus, without the works of the law; and of eternal life being a perfectly free gift of God, purchased *for* us, and not earned by merits of our own. "By grace," says that apostle (*i.e.* favour), "ye are saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God." And again, in writing to Titus, he says (Titus iii. 4), "After that the kindness and love of God our Saviour towards man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy, he saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour, that being justified by his grace we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." And numerous other passages to the effect will doubtless occur to you. Yet, on the other hand, in the very passage last cited, the same apostle immediately adds, "These things I will that thou affirm constantly" (*i.e.* steadily insist on), "in order that they who have believed in God may be *careful to maintain good works.*" Our Lord himself, again, who had assured his disciples that they could deserve no thanks, but were to call themselves after having done all that was commanded them, unprofitable servants, who had done only what it was their duty to do, yet tells them that one who gives a cup of water to one of his followers, in his name—

i.e. for his sake—shall in nowise lose his reward. He does not, you observe, merely *require* of us the practice of good works, but he assures us that they will be *rewarded*, using the very words which would have been applied in reference to the return made for some service a man was *not* bound to perform—the *wages* of a labourer. And the apostles also not only exhort men to the careful and active practice of every Christian virtue—among the rest, that of “ministering to the saints,” *i.e.* to our fellow-Christians (saints being the term they used to denote Christians)—but they also speak of our “working out our own salvation;” and in the passage now before us, it is implied that God would be “unrighteous” (*i.e.* unjust) if he were to “forget our labour of love,” in ministering to the saints—to our Christian brethren—for his name’s sake. Now if from these and other such passages (of which you may find many) any one should deduce the doctrine of the intrinsic merit of good works, and should describe man as capable of himself atoning for his sins, or of establishing a claim to immortal happiness by his virtuous conduct, and earning for himself salvation, as a labourer does his wages; if, I say, any one should thus interpret these expressions of the sacred writers, he would (as it must be evident to a man of plain common sense) be making these passages altogether inconsistent with those many others which not only imply, but most earnestly inculcate, the doctrine that eternal life is the free gift of God

through Jesus Christ, and that it is by grace we are saved, through faith, and not by ourselves.

And this would be a sufficient proof that such an interpretation must be erroneous. But we may be no less certain of the erroneousness of any interpretation of these latter passages, such as would make them inconsistent with the others. If any one teach you that your moral conduct is a matter of indifference in God's sight, because you are to be justified by faith; or again (which is a much more dangerous doctrine, because less revolting to common sense, and more plausible), that because Christian virtue is the natural fruit of Christian faith, therefore faith alone need be attended to, and no vigilance or exertion are needed in the practice of duty, and the moral training of our minds,—in short, that they who have believed in God need *not* be “*careful to maintain good works*,”—if any one should teach thus, either expressly and distinctly, or again virtually and impliedly, by dwelling continually and exclusively on faith, and keeping out of sight and in the background all that relates to Christian practice, you could easily perceive how utterly at variance such teaching would be with those portions of Scripture of which several have just been adverted to; and you would be enabled at once to condemn it, as making the sacred writers inconsistent with each other, and with themselves. Listen not my Christian friends, to either of those who take one, one portion, and another, another portion of the

Gospel, instead of the whole Gospel, and who explain away or keep out of sight such parts of God's Word as do not agree with their own theories and systems, but compare scripture with scripture, and allow the sacred writers (as indeed would be no more than fair towards any writer) to explain their own meaning. So, and so only, you will be learning from themselves—from far better instructors than any one else can be; so only will you be using the Holy Scriptures in the way they were designed to be used. In the present instance, I cannot think that there is even any difficulty, to a candid mind, in understanding rightly those portions of Scripture which I have been alluding to, when they are brought together and compared, and explained by each other. That no good works of man, even if practised through life in the most unsinning perfection, could earn for him a glorious and happy immortality, as a labourer earns his wages—this is not only most plainly and strongly set forth in Scripture, but is also what even natural reason might teach us. It is evident to common sense not only that in obeying the commands of our Master and Preserver we cannot possibly be doing any more than our strict duty to him (since *duty* means that which is due), but also that our most perfect obedience could not benefit *Him*; that he can have no *need* of the services of his creatures; and that moreover it is only through his assistance, through the Spirit of Christ strengthening and purifying us, that we can keep

his commandments; "for without me," says He himself, "ye can do nothing."

But all this is perfectly consistent with what we also find no less strongly dwelt on in Scripture, that Christ Jesus came to save his people, not *in* their sins, but (as the angel announced to his blessed Mother) "*from* their sins;" and that he "gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people zealous of good works:"

It is a doctrine intelligible and reasonable, as it is manifestly a scriptural doctrine, that we are intended in this our state of trial on earth to labour with vigilant care to become through his promised help fruitful branches of Him the true vine; and that as he enables us, so he requires us, to tread in his steps,—to purify ourselves even as he is pure, and to become, not the meritorious claimants of the mansions of bliss purchased and prepared by himself, but capable of entering and of enjoying them,—“meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.” And though he can have no need of our services, nor really derive, himself, any benefit from them, yet he condescends to encourage us in our good offices towards our brethren by calling them his own; forasmuch as he well knew that it is more blessed to give than to receive; that virtuous efforts, whatever benefit of any kind they may bring to others, are much more beneficial to those who use those efforts. And he knew that any cause for which men have exerted

themselves becomes itself endeared to them by those very efforts. Accordingly, instead of bestowing a distinct direct revelation of the Gospel on each individual for whom that Gospel was designed, He "sent forth labourers into his harvest,"—preachers who should give instruction, and who should commission others to give instruction, in the way of salvation. And these preachers were left—left by Him who had miraculously fed multitudes with a few loaves—to be supported in their journeyings, and relieved during their imprisonments, by the liberal contributions of their fellow-christians. Thus Paul, *e.g.*, received contributions for the Philippians, not only while among them, but when at Thessalonica, and again when imprisoned at Rome. And to the poor brethren at Jerusalem we find contributions raised by the good Christians. And all this was so ordained, as he himself points out to them, more for the sake of the givers than of the receivers. It was an exercise and cultivation of their gratitude for the inestimable benefit of the Gospel—of their liberality, and of their Christian love. It is not, said he, "that I desire the gift, but I desire the fruit that abounds on *your* account." In these and in all other Christian virtues, it is the will of our Divine Master that we should be, for our own sake, and with a view to our own benefit, exercised in the improvement of our moral character.

But though we cannot really do Him any service, nor can advance any claim on him except from his

own freely-promised mercy, still it is true no less, that whatever he does promise we may as fully and confidently *rely* on as if it were the fragment of a debt. And this is so far from being anything unintelligible or mysterious, that every upright man acts himself on a like principle in his dealings with any of his fellow-men. Such a person, if he think fit of his own free bounty to hold out to any one the promise of some benefit he was not at all bound (originally) to bestow, will hold himself bound thenceforth by his own promise. He will be sure to fulfil whatever expectations he has raised; and the other party may fully calculate on his benefactor's faithfully making good his word, though he will not be therefore less a *benefactor*. The *making* of the promise is a mere act of *free bounty*; but the *keeping* of a promise when made, is what may reasonably be looked for from his justice. In like manner, when we are told that "God is not unrighteous [*i.e.* unjust] to forget our labour of love," it certainly is implied that it *would* be unjust in him to do so, and that it is *therefore* we may rely on his *not* forgetting us. But this is because he has freely promised what man could have never claimed on any other ground; and that we are authorised and bound fully to trust in him, since he is *faithful* that hath promised.

That the relief of the distressed, and especially of our distressed *neighbours*, is one of the Christian duties most earnestly dwelt on by our Lord and his apostles, it would be almost superfluous to point out

to you. Those who have fed the hungry and clothed the naked, and visited the sick, he declares he will consider as having done it unto *Him*.

Again, one who should claim merit in God's sight for bestowing on the poor a part of that of which the whole is the gift to him of God's providence, and should think by this merit to earn for himself eternal life,—no such person could be well pleasing in the sight of his Divine Master. . But though our Lord's *blessing* on those who minister to the afflicted is evidently to be understood with this qualification, that they are to perform this, and all their other duties also, in a right spirit—though his blessing is to be thus qualified—his sentence of *condemnation* is plainly to be understood without any limitation at all. Those who shall have neglected this duty, who shall have done it *not* to those sufferers whom our Lord calls his “brethren,” will surely be disowned by him, however vehement their professions of faith—however assiduous and apparently zealous their devotions—however earnestly they may call him Lord, Lord,—while they “do not the things that he says.” As for the particular work in which your aid is now invited, it is, as no doubt you are aware, the relief of your distressed and deserving fellow-citizens, who are weighed down by indigence, by hunger and cold and nakedness.

Any one who really feels that love and gratitude to his Master and Redeemer which is manifestly his due, will inquire carefully, not what he may find

a plausible excuse for *not* doing, but what he *can* do, allowably and properly, for his Divine Master's service. And to aid the ministry of the clergy, or to contribute to that aid, in such a manner as not to intrude into their peculiar office—to help them in such ways as are open to the laity—this is what is not only permitted, but required, from all who are Christians in anything more than in name. And an opening for this kind of labour of love is afforded by the society whose cause I am now advocating. The character and objects of the Parochial Visitor's Society, which has now been so many years in existence, I need not occupy your time in explaining, as there are so many of its reports which have been laid before the public. You will see from them what important and much-needed and valuable aid it has afforded to the labours of the clergy; and you will feel wonder, I think, that so great an amount of good should have been effected with such scanty funds; scanty to a degree which I must say reflects discredit on the members of our church, especially when we compare ourselves with Roman Catholics and Protestant Dissenters who are burdened with the entire support of their own ministers, and with the whole cost of their places of worship. I fear that they may reasonably plead, and do plead, in behalf of their own religion against ours, that we are less in earnest about our own than they are; and that we are attached to our own church in great measure because it is an *endowed* church, and its ministers are

supported without calls on us for voluntary contributions.

But we have an opportunity of refuting this by giving liberally where there does exist a need for it; by supporting more effectually than hitherto this branch of our church's ministrations—this society which has no endowments.

In fact, the principles in which we are taught in Scripture that men will be judged by God, are very much they proceed on in judging one another. Take as an instance a case of which I am naturally reminded by the present occasion—that of the orphan children of the poor, instructed and well brought up through the help of their richer brethren. Suppose any one should offer to certain poor children (of indigent parents) the advantage of a good education, such as might improve their natural powers of mind, convey to them some useful knowledge, and place much more within their reach; training them at the same time in habits of order, cleanliness, decency, and steady application. Suppose again, further, that he should think fit to do much more than this in the case of some who might, like these orphans, be left friendless and destitute; that he should offer to maintain them till they should be able to maintain themselves; should have them taught some branch of industry for that purpose, and should moreover provide them with a supply of tools and materials, and promise them some kind of premium as a reward for good behaviour, in case of their conducting them-

selves well and labouring diligently for a certain number of years. Suppose, I say, some liberal benefactor to make such an offer as this to a number of destitute and helpless children—which, of course, we should expect them gladly and gratefully to accept—surely they would be justified in fully calculating on their benefactor's making good the promise thus freely and kindly held out. To suppose that they would be forgotten by him when they had studied to comply with his directions, would be to regard him as “unrighteous,” *i.e.* unjust and faithless. But would any one of them, think you, on receiving the promised reward, be so stupidly arrogant and thankless as to pretend that he had earned those bountiful gifts by his own merits, as a matter of right? that their work was *their own*, when another had supplied the implements, the materials and the instruction; and that they could claim a premium as matter of rightful demand for what they had no one to thank but themselves?

But to make the parallel a little closer, suppose that this benefactor had the power, and had exercised it, of bestowing all bodily and mental powers; and that these children were indebted to him not only for instruction how to employ and improve their faculties, but for the faculties themselves—for their limbs and all their senses—how absurdly arrogant and ungrateful would it be for persons thus benefited by him, to boast before him of their merits, instead of humbly and thankfully acknowledging that all

they had done, as well as all they had received, came from his bounty!

Now such, my Christian friends, is a faint representation of our case in respect of our Heavenly Father, in whom "we live and move," and who has also promised to them that ask him in faith the gift of his "Spirit which helpeth our infirmities," and which alone enables us to bring forth such fruits as he requires.

But again, what if any of those children should say, "Since our benefactor has been so kind to us, we will trust wholly to him, and use no exertions in learning or labouring; he has bestowed, and can afford to bestow, on us bountifully whatever we need; we have only to be thankful to him, and rely on him for all supplies, without presuming that we ourselves can do anything, without troubling ourselves to take any care or pains." Should we not say to such a person, "Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed; thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury." (Matt. xxv. 26.) But I need not pursue the application any further. You well know how such a man would be dealt with, and you know also how you will be dealt with if you should follow such an example. You know that as God is not unrighteous to forget the labour of love of those who for his sake minister to their

poorer brethren, so neither will he forget those who have neglected such duties ; who have done it *not* unto the least of these his brethren. But if you feel only as much gratitude for “the exceeding great love and kindness of God our Saviour,” as you would fully expect a child to feel towards a benefactor who should have provided for him in this world ; if you feel only as much gratitude as that, you will earnestly seek and joyfully embrace every opportunity of showing your thankfulness by making to Him an offering only of his own gifts to you, and of glorifying Him, “the great husbandman,” by “bringing forth much fruit.”

With regard to that particular good work—that branch of beneficence to which you are now invited—there is no need to say much in behalf of education for the poor, because the subject is one that has been so much discussed, and to which attention has been so long and so generally called, as to be familiar to the mind of almost every one. It is a subject, indeed, in which there still exists much difference of opinion ; but much of that difference is rather speculative than practical, for whether the difference of education among the labouring classes be regarded as a most valuable good, or as an unavoidable evil (and in the present state of society in this country all thinking men must, I conceive, admit it to be either the one or the other), in either case, the right direction of their education, so as to produce the most good and the least evil possible, must be equally important.

If any one should think it desirable that the labouring classes in any country should be kept in a state of blind and implicit submission to the higher order, without any share of political influence, he must at least perceive that such is not, and cannot be, the state of things in this country. And if he should even think that political influence can safely be entrusted to men in a state of barbarian ignorance, still he cannot but see that, in point of fact, knowledge, and the desire of knowledge, have gained, and are gaining, ground, and that education from some quarter or other, and of some kind or other, is coveted and will be obtained by the mass of the people. So that, even in his view, it would be a most important duty to take measures for providing the most pure and soundest education—to diffuse the most beneficial kind of knowledge. Most of those who hear me, testify, I trust, by their presence here on this occasion, their conviction of the importance of this duty. And I would fain hope they feel that in discharging it they are not merely seeking to mitigate an unavoidable evil, but are promoting a great positive good. I would fain hope that you do not regard knowledge as in itself at variance with Christian faith or Christian practice; that you do not consider piety, and integrity, and contented industry, and the other virtues that bless and adorn humble life, as plants that flourish best on an uncultivated soil.

I will only notice, therefore, one circumstance in

reference to the particular institutions now before us, which is, that they are exempt from an objection—in my view a very groundless one—which has been brought against some schools, that of taking off the children of the poor from those pursuits of laborious industry by which they are in after life to be maintained. From my experience, indeed, of daily schools (which has not been small), I have never found this to be the case in the smallest degree. But at any rate, to such a school as this, a Sunday-school, and to an infant-school, the objection, such as it is, manifestly cannot apply at all. And in reference to the latter, I will add that I believe all who have had experience in education, and exercised a sound judgment on the subject, will agree that it cannot be begun too early: The very first impressions should, if possible, be made on the right side. Particular branches of knowledge indeed may after be equally well acquired, earlier or later; but habits should be formed, and what is more, habits, good or evil, *will* be formed, when the mind is most tender. A child whose first regular education is commenced even at seven years old, will generally be found to have not a little to unlearn. With the peculiar circumstances of the Female Orphan House you are probably well acquainted. For its careful management, it long received grants in aid of the charitable contributions bestowed. But these grants have been gradually diminished for a good many years; and the institution is now restricted,

not by want of its buildings, but by deficiency of funds, from effecting the full amount of the good for which in all other respects provision has been made and for which there is an urgent call. But for the scantiness of funds, instead of 100 orphans, the institution could receive and provide for more than 150. I lament that it is not better supported than it has hitherto been by the inhabitants of other parts of Ireland, on which it has an equal claim as on those of the city, seeing it is an Irish and not a Dublin charity, except as to mere local position of the building. And I would accordingly urge on you, as many as may have opportunity, to endeavour to make known and to recommend the institution to all persons in every part of this island to whom you may have access. But let not your example be wanting to second your recommendation. And if, after all, others do neglect their duty, remember that that is *their* concern, and that it is for your *own* duty you are responsible. Bestow then, liberally, on your poorer brethren the greatest boon it is in your power to bestow. It is a boon not only to themselves, but to society. Many services that you might render to an individual would benefit him alone; but those who have been well educated as children are a blessing not only to themselves, but to all around them.

It is indeed a great public object, that through our ministry, regular instruction in this place should be supplied to adults in religious and moral duties;

but the rising generation, it should never be forgotten, is the morrow of society; on them instruction is both the most easily and most profitably bestowed; and on their training, as children, depends most of the good or the evil they will learn in after life.

May He, then, whose providence has bestowed on you all you possess of this world's goods, grant you also a heart to contribute not only liberally, but cheerfully, and on Christian principles, to this good work. When this world and its goods shall be no more, may you find by blessed experience that God is not unrighteous.

“Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to that power that worketh in us, unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end.”

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